





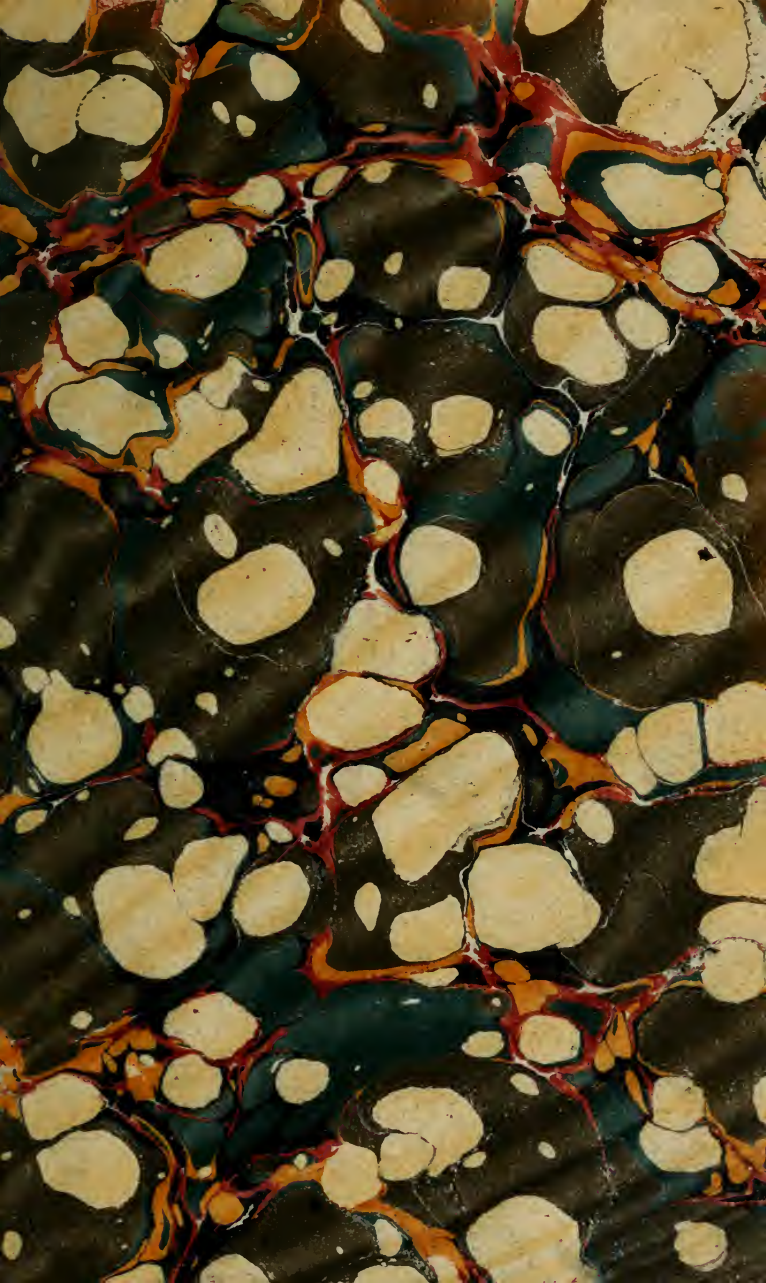
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MISREPRESENTATION

OR

SCENES IN REAL LIFE.

ONE OF A SERIES OF TALES ON THE PASSIONS.

——— A l'egro fanciul porgiamo aspersi
Di soave licor gli orli del vaso,
Succhi amari ingannato intanto ei lieve,
E da l'inganno suo, vita riceve.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MISREPRESENTATION ;

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CHAPTER I.

THERE was a fearful conflict in Lord St. Maur's breast ; early impressions, deeply-rooted habits, mortified vanity, and irritated pride struggled fiercely for the mastery. But, better feelings in the end prevailing, he saw and acknowledged his error. Cecil, it is true, had been to blame ; but was there on his side no provocation ? And vexed, as he naturally was, with General Moubray, whose groundless suspicions had been, in fact, the main cause of all the mischief, he could not deny that those surmises, childish

and absurd as they now appeared, would have obtained but little weight, had he not weakly suffered his mind to harbour an unjust prejudice against the orphan girl confided to his guidance by a dying parent's love. She was unhappy, too ; yes, he had seen her weep, and it was his unkindness caused those tears to flow ; and then the letter, written in the first burst of angry jealousy, might it not injure her materially with that relative on whom so much of her future welfare depended ?

As these painful considerations presented themselves to his imagination, again and again did he endeavour to find some excuse, some palliation for his conduct, but without success. The contemplation of the mournful picture only served to deepen his regret ; and as, in all the bitterness of self-reproach, he reflected on the harshness of his dealings with his ward ; and then remembered her loveliness, her grace, and above all, her affection for Mary, he solemnly determined that, let what would arise, he would

in future have no more of Cecil Moubray's tears to answer for. Alas ! such resolutions are easier made than kept.

From that moment, Lord St. Maur's manner towards Miss Moubray plainly proclaimed his altered sentiments, and it would have been well for Cecil's future happiness could she have met him in a kindred spirit ; but her feelings had been too much outraged, her pride too deeply wounded. The trodden worm is said to turn on its destroyer, and Cecil Moubray, being no worm, but a proud, high-spirited girl, spurned indignantly the olive branch thus tendered for her acceptance ; nay more, coupling the change in her guardian's deportment with a report which about this time reached Selwood, she actually despised the man who had formerly tyrannized over her, and now, she imagined, sought a reconciliation, merely because her uncle's return to England seemed probable ; and, as she made no attempt to conceal her sentiments, it is not wonderful that Lord St.

Maur speedily relinquished his unavailing efforts.

“We understand” said the Standard, in announcing the above-mentioned rumour, “that General Moubray is on the point of returning to England ; the cause of his recal is, we believe, an increase of that mental aberration to which must be attributed the desertion of this formerly clear-minded and upright individual from those principles to which alone the country is indebted for the preservation of all that is valuable in church and state. While deploring the condition of a nation labouring under the misrule of a government, only one degree less insane than their imbecile adherent, it is impossible to describe the shame and indignation with which we warn the public against the base intention of ministers to degrade, and, if possible, render contemptible in the eyes of the nation, that august assembly, that bulwark of the public freedom, that palladium of the rights of man, the House of Lords, by including

General Moubray in the unconstitutional attempt about soon to be made to swamp the peerage.”

The Globe assured its numerous readers, “That while the cause of General Moubray’s return (the delicate state of his health) must be a subject of deep regret, all true patriots would hail with satisfaction a rumour, which, if well grounded, would prove of inestimable benefit to the country at large, and might ultimately be the means of saving the chamber of irresponsible legislators from the annihilation to which they seemed disposed to rush with headlong speed. For,” added the reforming newspaper, “it is only by the infusion of such men and such principles into the upper house, we can hope to preserve that branch of the constitution in its present state.”

While the Morning Post, after announcing General Moubray’s return nearly after the fashion of its evening tory cotemporary, proceeded to inform its readers, that “As General

Moubray was unmarried, and the title about to be revived (in default of male heirs) descended in the female line, Miss Moubray, whose appearance had created so great a sensation last spring in the fashionable world, must be considered as the future Baroness Eldersleigh. We understand," continued that organ of gaiety and fashion, "that a marriage between this beautiful and accomplished young lady and her noble guardian, Earl St. Maur, with whom she now resides, will take place on General Moubray's arrival in England; in which case the succession will probably be altered in favour of the second son."

For the first time in her life, perhaps, Lady Emily heard a surmise of her brother's marriage without anxiety. Cecil, after glancing her eye over the paragraph, threw the paper from her with an air of scornful disdain; while the Earl read the passage more than once, then looked towards Mary, and continued silent and thoughtful during the remainder of the day; perhaps,

he was reflecting on his former *very happy* union. The plain truth of all these reports was simply this:—General Moubray's irascibility having rendered him totally unfit for the duties of his situation, his recal became imperative; and, as his political influence might render him a powerful enemy (and there is no foe more bitter than a disappointed friend), it was intended to offer the revival of the Barony of Eldersleigh, should the veteran shew any symptoms of a refractory nature.

Cecil's happiness at the prospect of her uncle's return was great indeed; the rumour of his ill health gave her little concern,—it was, probably, merely political; besides, General Moubray had always been a valetudinarian. "She was to leave Selwood, to escape from Lord St. Maur, to return once again to her own home, to the protection of her indulgent relative,—that home would be a paradise,—that relation all kindness and affection." Had Cecil been aware of the value of money, it might have

occurred to her that General Moubray's style of living was by no means equal to his income, and she would have trembled for his liberality ; had her knowledge of human nature been more profound, she might have questioned the affection of one, who, from motives of mere ambition, had accepted an appointment which involved a separation from his niece at the very period when his protection and advice were most needed. But hers was not the age at which we can imagine double motives in those we love. Youth is not the season of suspicion or mistrust ; it is not till after-life we learn (oh, how unwillingly !) the bitter truth, that treachery may lurk beneath the honeyed smile ; that fond caresses, bland endearments, and warm assurances of tenderness and love, serve often but to mask a selfish, hollow, and deceitful heart.

Cecil could not for a moment doubt the affection of her benefactor ; and, true to that principle of our nature which, forgetting past and disregarding future evils, leads us to aggravate our

present annoyances, she abandoned herself to the most delightful anticipations; and bright was the glance of her dark blue eye, and joyous the smile which curled her ruby lip, as she spoke of her future plans—her visionary happiness. Then the delight of arranging the establishment. Eldersleigh, which would, of course, be the usual place of residence, must be newly furnished. Guillot should do it in his most superior style; a conservatory, too, must be built; and the old-fashioned gardens altered to the taste of the present day. With regard to a town house, Cecil was rather at a loss; for her uncle fancied the air of London disagreed with him; still she thought it probable he might be induced to try Carlton Terrace, or Belgrave Square. All, even to the colour of the carriages, and a slight alteration, whereby General Moubray's liveries would assume a more dashing appearance, were discussed and settled with girlish eagerness.

Lady Emily entered warmly into Miss Mou-

bray's anticipations, and was never weary of descanting on the various important matters just enumerated ; indeed, the interest she evinced in the subject might have led a stranger to imagine her ladyship as much concerned in General Moubray's return and future establishment as was Cecil herself. To say the truth, Lady Emily, although really partial to Miss Moubray, was not altogether sorry to lose her ; for Anna in a very few weeks would attain her eighteenth year, and it would, indeed, be a very serious undertaking to chaperone *three* young ladies ; besides, a new field would now be open, and who could tell what a visit to Eldersleigh might not produce !

But to Lord St. Maur, Cecil's ecstatic delight was far from pleasing : he was well aware it did not spring solely from the prospect of a re-union with her uncle ; and he was mortified that he was not included in an invitation, which, embracing every other member of the family, had been even extended to Mrs. Henrietta Beauclerc, should she

not think the journey too great an undertaking ; and, I am sorry to be obliged to add, that, observing his dissatisfaction, Cecil's visions of expected bliss became more vivid,—more enchanting. Could she have suspected that she was, by this display of waywardness, positively giving pain, she would have acted differently ; for Cecil would not willingly have hurt the feelings of anybody ; but, judging by her guardian's past conduct towards her, she saw in his present vexation nothing but a fresh evidence of his dislike, —a feeling that appeared to her so intense, that he could not even bear the notion of her being happy anywhere.

General Moubray's return did not actually take place for some months. The interval, however, was far from being tedious to our heroine ; it proved, in fact, one of the gayest portions of her existence. The only son of the county member attained his majority ; the heir of the noble house of B—— was christened ; one of the Duke of S——'s least hopeful daughters be-

came a bride; on all of which occasions balls and other festivities took place. There was a succession of visitors at the Castle, and Lord Piercefield, relinquishing his former system of excluding ladies from the invitations to Elton (as the public prints informed their readers), entertained a distinguished circle of guests, including Lady Emily, Louisa, and Cecil, at his magnificent abode. Miss Moubray enjoyed all these gaieties as much as a young lady of her age, who finds herself the principal object of attraction, might be supposed to do; and yet a ball-room was not, perhaps, the most advantageous sphere for beauty such as hers—which had nothing dazzling, nothing striking—so much so, indeed, that in a crowd she might have passed almost unnoticed. But the peculiarity of her situation, and the brilliancy of her prospects, excited a degree of curiosity on her behalf; and curiosity speedily gave way to interest, and interest to a deeper feeling, in those who gazed upon her exquisitely-chiselled features, or watched the changes of her

ever-varying countenance. Again, Cecil's manners were retiring, and she spoke little in mixed assemblies ; but that soft, musical voice, once heard, could never be forgotten ; and her conversation, now full of playful wit, now tinged with the deep feeling of her character, was as a charm captivating the attention, and rousing the sympathies of the spell-bound listener. She was, in truth, a highly-gifted creature ; and among the many who sought the heiress, or loved the woman, was the lordly owner of Elton. His flattering offer was rejected, and Lady Emily almost overwhelmed with astonishment.

"Only think," said she, one evening (the girls being in the music-room, and Sir Thomas, her brother, and herself, the sole occupants of the drawing-room) ; "only think of Cecil's having refused Lord Piercefield !"

"Has she, then, *really* refused him ?" said Sir Thomas. "I'm sorry for it ; I should like to think we were still to keep her amongst us."

"I don't wonder at your surprise. I declare

I can think of nothing else; it's the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of."

"What reason does she give for her refusal?"

"Oh, the most ridiculous reason in the world. She says she doesn't like him; so odd, you know, not to like a man with forty thousand a year! I can hardly think she is in earnest. I am sure I wish he had asked Louisa instead."

"And will General Moubray be pleased with his niece's decision?" inquired Lord St. Maur.

"Cecil doesn't mean to tell him anything about it. I only found it out by accident; and we must take care, when he comes, not to betray her. He is, it seems, extremely anxious that she should make a good marriage; and was once very angry with her for refusing some young man. But she says, she would rather forfeit everything than marry a man she could not love."

"It's a thousand pities," observed Sir Thomas, "Cecil has no friend whose influence she would acknowledge; it is impossible to see so much

decision of character, joined with such deep feeling, without trembling for her future happiness. Her mother's death has been a very great misfortune."

"Yes," replied Lady Emily; "if Mrs Moubray was a sensible woman, which I very much doubt; for she, it seems, has put most of these notions into Cecil's head. Would you believe it, she sometimes goes so far as to say she doesn't care whether she marries or not; and she thinks she shall die an old maid."

"And, to judge by Miss Moubray's conduct, she seems likely enough to keep that resolution," observed her guardian.

"As for that," said Lady Emily, "Cecil's head is a little turned just now with all the admiration she meets with. The men flatter her so, I never saw anything like it; but when she is five or six years older, I dare say she will be glad enough to marry any man that asks her; still it is very provoking she should not fancy Lord Piercefield; it would have been very

pleasant to have had such a nice neighbour ; and now, I dare say, he will shut himself up again, and be as unsociable as ever. Besides, he has an exceedingly pretty place in the Isle of Wight, not far from Cowes. I am inclined to think a watering-place a very pleasant change sometimes. You know it was at Brighton Lady Harriet D—— first met Sir Henry Fielding. But—bless me, Sir Thomas, you are falling asleep, I declare. Sir Thomas, Sir Thomas, pray, rouse yourself ; I assure you, there is nothing so unwholesome as sleeping after dinner. St. Maur, do ring the bell, that we may have the card table or backgammon board brought.— Now, my dear Sir Thomas, which shall it be, a hand at piquet, or a hit at backgammon ?”

The drowsy Baronet, in obedience to his sister's directions, rose slowly from his easy chair ; and Lord St. Maur walked into the music room, and with something like a compliment asked for a repetition of the air Cecil had just concluded. But she was too tired to com-

ply with his request. I am afraid Lady Emily's assertion was correct; Miss Moubray's head *was* a little turned.

The first check which Cecil's blissful anticipations received, appeared in the form of a letter from her uncle. He was in London, and instead of desiring her immediate presence, informed his niece, that as soon as some matters of business were concluded, he intended to proceed to Cheltenham, where she must join him. At first, Cecil was a good deal disappointed and uneasy, as she now feared General Moubray's illness might be more than political. But being in that happy frame of mind which will not long harbour unpleasant forebodings, she comforted herself by reflecting that persons returning from a warm climate generally require, or fancy they require, the Cheltenham waters; and that, as probably her uncle's stay in London would be short, he had been unwilling to expose her to the inconveniences of an hotel. Then, Cheltenham was the very place to which her guardian

had prohibited her going; it was therefore almost a triumph over him that she should be summoned there immediately on General Moubray's return; in consequence, the mischievous Cecil, not content with expressing herself delighted with the prospect, and rapturously descanting on the pleasurable rides and drives of that well-known watering place, persuaded Lady Emily, that a fortnight's trial of the waters (it was the end of December) would be exceedingly useful to Anna; and as Louisa happened to like the idea, Lord St. Maur was informed that the whole covey intended to take wing together.

But if Cecil meant to tease her guardian by this scheme, she was considerably mistaken; for it chanced that the arrangement was particularly agreeable to him, inasmuch as it removed all difficulty respecting the transfer of his ward. It had more than once occurred to Lord St. Maur, that, as General Moubray could not come to fetch his niece, it would be expedient for

him to escort her himself to Cheltenham ; and, independent of the disinclination he naturally felt to becoming the travelling companion of one who disliked his society, the Earl had received so uncourteous a reply to his unfortunate communication respecting Armstrong, that he had little wish for any personal interview with the testy veteran. But this plan settled the matter at once ; far, therefore, from raising any difficulties, or making the shadow of objection to it, Lord St. Maur cheerfully consented to Mary's joining the party.

General Moubray's business being at length concluded, his niece received her summons ; and on a bright frosty morning in January, Lord St. Maur's often repeated wish became accomplished, and Cecil Moubray left Selwood. Whether he derived immediate relief from her absence I cannot tell ; probably not ; we are all creatures of habit ; and as for the last nine months she had been the constant object of his

solicitude, it is just possible he could not all at once shake off her recollection. It is, at all events, certain that Mordaunt, with whom he spent the greatest portion of Lady Emily's absence, remarked in him a considerable degree of reserve respecting Miss Moubray; and a great disinclination to take part in the conversation of which she formed the subject.

CHAPTER II.

LADY EMILY'S visit to Cheltenham was extended to six weeks ; and on the morning following her return, while the party were still at the breakfast table, they were joined by Sir Thomas Warham, whose place (Westfield) was within a ride of Selwood.

“ Well,” said the Baronet, after declining a second edition of the morning meal, “ how did you leave my little favourite? As happy as she expected, and deserved to be?”

“ No,” replied Lady Emily, “ I am afraid very much the reverse ; for as I was just telling St.

Maur, I think that horrid old General Moubray must be out of his senses ; it is inconceivable the life he leads the poor girl. I dare say he will be the death of her, shutting her up and never letting her speak to a creature."

"Perhaps," observed Sir Thomas (who did not always place the most implicit reliance on his sister-in-law's accuracy) ; "perhaps General Moubray does not think it wise to trust his niece among the sharpers and fortune hunters who generally throng such places as Cheltenham."

"I really think," replied Louisa, "that under mamma's care there would not have been any great danger for Miss Moubray."

"Besides," added Lady Emily, "if he does think it right to keep her away from balls and evening parties, there was surely no occasion to coop her up and not even let her pay a morning visit, or spend a quiet hour with us."

"And does General Moubray carry the restraint to that extent ?

“ Yes ; you will hardly believe me, when I tell you, that I do not think we saw Cecil a dozen times during the six weeks we were at Cheltenham. And more than once, when she had engaged herself to us, he prevented her coming.”

“ Is General Moubray much out of health ?”

“ He fancies so ; but I cannot say I think there is much the matter with him, excepting ill humour ; to be sure, his temper is dreadful ; and do you know—it really was most unfortunate, but I quite forgot he was to know nothing about Lord Piercefield ; and one morning I happened to mention it, and anything to equal his rage I never saw ; I declare, I was quite frightened ; I thought he would have had a fit.”

Lord St. Maur looked exceedingly displeased on hearing this proof of his sister's indiscretion ; while Sir Thomas observed, “ It certainly is a pity, a very great pity, that Cecil refused Lord Piercefield ; at the same time, no one can blame her for shewing she is above mercenary consi-

derations. General Moubray must be an absolute brute."

"Very little better, I'm afraid," said Lady Emily.

"Yes," cried Lady Mary, "and when my aunt Emily went to Gloucester, Cecil promised I should stay with her; but her uncle was so cross he said I must be sent home."

"Perhaps you were noisy and troublesome, Mary."

"No, indeed, papa, I hadn't said one word; I was sitting as quiet as a mouse, only I happened to tumble over the stool as I was walking across the room."

"And then," continued Anna, "one day when mamma and I called to see Cecil, he was quite savage, and almost turned us out of the house. Think, too, of his selling Fairy, when Cecil was so fond of her."

"Has General Moubray parted with the mare?" asked Lord St. Maur.

“Sold her to the riding master for a mere nothing ; thirty guineas, I believe.”

“Thirty guineas ! I would have given eighty myself.”

“Not worth it,” observed Sir Thomas ; “sixty-five or seventy quite enough ; she was a pretty creature, certainly ; but too slight for you, and too high-spirited for a lady. I never liked to see Cecil ride her.”

“And yet she used to manage her admirably,” remarked Anna.

“She did, indeed, ride extremely well,” rejoined Sir Thomas. “But why did the General sell the mare ?”

“From motives of economy, I believe ; he didn’t like the expense of keeping her at Cheltenham ; said she was eating her head off, and that he should be ruined. Just as if keeping one horse could cost much.”

“But I suppose Fairy was not more expensive than another horse ; and Cecil will have one, I imagine.”

“ I’m afraid not ; he’s grown too stingy to give her a horse, or anything else.”

“ Stingy !” exclaimed the gentlemen, in the same breath.

“ To the last degree. I assure you my maid tells me, he can scarcely get a servant to stay with him ; he half starves them, and does nothing but scold Cecil for her extravagance whilst she was with us ; although, I am sure she did not spend more than was necessary.”

“ No, no,” said the Earl, “ Cecil Moubray was not extravagant.”

“ General Moubray must be greatly altered,” observed Sir Thomas, after a short silence. “ I remember, some years ago, when we were both young men, our regiments were quartered in the same town ; and he was then reckoned extravagant, kept racers, played high, and all that sort of thing. One can hardly understand his having become niggardly.”

“ The change, however, is not unusual ;” replied the Earl, “ the gambler in youth frequently

becomes a miser in old age ; and by no very unnatural process either, since the same avarice which leads the young man to the gambling table, or the turf, will in after life induce miserly habits. It is, after all, the same vice under a different form, and adapted to the altered nature of his feelings ; for in youth we seek the attainment of our wishes by active measures ; in old age by passive ones : energy is the characteristic of the morning of our life, quiescence of its close."

"Certainly," said Lady Emily, who did not quite take in all her brother's remark. "General Moubray is extremely quiet ; he scarcely ever walks at all. (Mary, my dear, do leave that knife alone ; you'll cut your fingers.) But don't you think, Sir Thomas, it's very hard that because he's too old and stupid to move about himself, he should make such a prisoner of his niece ? Poor dear girl ; I can't bear to think of her being so unkindly treated ; after all

her delight, too, at the prospect of his coming home."

"I wish," replied the Baronet; "I only wish I were thirty years younger, and then Cecil should not be long a prisoner; at least, it should not be my fault if she were."

"My dear Sir Thomas," cried Lady Emily, "you're surely not thinking of proposing to Cecil. Pray don't, I beseech you, make any such attempt; I really don't think you have a single chance, although, to be sure, she did say, she would rather marry you than Horace."

"I really think," replied Lord St. Maur, rather sharply; "before Miss Moubray makes such decisions, it would be as well if she were to ascertain how far she's likely to be called upon for her opinion on the subject."

"Oh, mamma," cried Anna, "that was not Cecil's meaning; it wasn't indeed, she only said —."

"Well, well," interrupted the Baronet, good-

humouredly, "it matters little what she said; we all know young ladies seldom speak their real sentiments on such matters. I assure you, St. Maur, I should be very sorry to enter the lists with you."

"Indeed," exclaimed Lady Emily, "I hope that neither of you will think of doing anything of the kind. It would be exceedingly foolish, I assure you; for General Moubray may live these twenty years. I asked Dr. B—— very particularly about it; and now that he is grown so stingy, and seems to care so little about Cecil, I dare say he wouldn't give her a shilling."

"Papa, when will Cecil come back again? There's nobody now to teach me my French and Italian words."

"I should think, Mary, a governess might do that."

"Oh, papa, don't have a governess, I couldn't bear her: let Cecil come back again, then I shall want no one."

Lord St. Maur made no reply ; but he looked at Mary until his countenance assumed an expression of softness almost feminine. “And this,” thought he, “is the close of all those gay hopes. Poor Cecil ! What would I not give to recal that letter. If you are to be unhappy, I would not, for Mary’s sake, that mine should be the hand to deal the blow.”

“Mamma,” said Louisa, who thought they had talked long enough about Miss Moubray ; and wished to draw attention to an amourette of her own : “who shall we ask to meet the Lawsons ?”

“I declare I hardly know. Lord and Lady William B—— will be here ; and I thought of the Thornboroughs.”

“Oh, they are so tiresome. Lady Thornborough bores one to death ; and Sir John can talk of nothing but pheasants and partridges. Besides, Mr. Thornborough is away, you know.”

“Pray, who are these Lawsons ?”

“A most agreeable family, I assure you ; and

their politeness to us while we were at Cheltenham, really surprising. I wont say who paid the most attention, or which young lady their ball was given to compliment; shall I, Louisa?"

"A conquest of yours, then, I suppose, Louisa?" observed Sir Thomas.

Miss Warham simpered; while her mamma rejoined, with that air of complacency usually visible on mamma's countenances, when their daughter's triumphs are the theme of conversation; "You have made a good guess, Sir Thomas, Lou. *has* run away with Robert Lawson's heart."

"And left her own behind, I conclude; eh, Louisa? But I hope at any rate there is money; people cannot live on air and love, you know."

"Why," said Lady Emily, "I should not think there was any danger of that. Mr. Lawson has been in India, where everybody makes a large fortune; and although there are three daughters, there is but one son."

“Hem,” said Sir Thomas; “In these days, in India, as everywhere else, it is easier to spend than to make a fortune.”

“Very true,” replied Lady Emily. “And I hope no daughter of mine will think of making an imprudent marriage. But, I assure you, Mr. Lawson appears to be extremely well off; they live in good style, have a house in town, in Portman-square, I believe; besides a place somewhere in the country. Didn’t they talk of a country place, Lou.?”

“Yes, mamma, in Essex, I believe.”

“Most likely rented,” muttered Sir Thomas, trembling for his purse.

“How many *daughters* did you say there were?” inquired Lord St. Maur, also apprehensive of an attack, although not of the same nature as that dreaded by the Baronet.

“There are three Miss Lawsons,” answered his sister.

“Are they pretty?”

“There’s nothing extraordinary about them,

one way or other," replied Lady Emily ; "but I dare say they'll marry well enough. And as Robert is the only son, of course the bulk of the property will come to him ; and he really is a very nice young man ; and as Lou. likes him, I really see no reason why they should not marry."

"And are those three girls *all* coming?"

"Why, yes ; of course, I could not ask one without the others ; it would have given great offence ; for they are the most united, attached family, I ever met with." And, while Lady Emily proceeded to eulogise the Lawson tribe, Lord St. Maur resolved upon making his escape before their visit took place.

But Lady Emily was unlucky in her invitations to "nice young men," at least, as far as regarded her matrimonial schemes for her daughters. For Lawson Père, so far from being wealthy, was not in circumstances to admit of his making any addition to his son's allowance ; consequently, when, dazzled by Louisa's high

connexions, and concluding from Lady Emily's style of living at Cheltenham, that Miss Warham must be entitled to some fortune, Robert made a formal offer of his hand, there was a mutual disappointment, and all hope of a union between the young people appeared to be at an end. The old gentleman, however, dying in the course of the summer, he succeeded to twelve thousand pounds; and as he was in the law, and Louisa in love, it was thought that, with the interest of Lord St. Maur's wedding-present of five thousand pounds, added to a yearly sacrifice of as many hundreds from Lady Emily's income, together with a handsome supply of plate and furniture from Sir Thomas, the marriage might be suffered to take place.

And now, reader, if you please, we will return to Cecil, the discomforts of whose situation had not been exaggerated.

Foiled in his schemes of family aggrandisement, shunned by the party he had forsaken, mistrusted by that which he had joined, equally

despised by both, General Moubray returned to England a soured and disappointed man. But although the mortification of his failure preyed upon his spirits, and undermined a constitution never robust, his disposition underwent no improvement. Pride was, it is true, laid low, ambition gone, but avarice remained ; and daily did that soul-corroding vice acquire a stronger hold upon a being essentially selfish, and whose natural eccentricity of character, being no longer checked by fear of the opinions of others, led to the commission of numberless acts of meanness and cupidity. The little affection he had formerly felt for his niece had entirely subsided ; for she, too, had failed in accomplishing the grand object of his wishes respecting her,—an early and splendid marriage. And he considered that her conduct with regard to Henry Armstrong fully justified any degree of harshness or unkindness on his part.

But although no longer an object of interest, Cecil was, in a measure, useful to her heartless

relative. She read to him for hours together, wrote under his dictation, accompanied him in his drives ; and, in the frequent fits of ill humour to which General Moubray was subject, patiently bore from him that which the commonest menial would not have endured ; for, independent of a feeling of duty, Cecil loved her uncle. She had been taught to look upon him as her benefactor, and placing to the account of sickness the unfavourable change, to which she would willingly have blinded herself altogether, the high-spirited, but affectionate girl, studied his caprices, submitted to his whims, and tended the fretful invalid with unremitting assiduity.

Still it was a tedious mode of life ; and when she found that an attempt to escape, even for a few minutes, from the unwholesome atmosphere of their only sitting room, was followed by an immediate recal ; that recreation, or even exercise, was limited to a drive when General Moubray felt inclined to take the air ; that her submission and anxiety to please served but to in-

crease his peevishness ; it was impossible not to revert to Selwood Castle, with its airy apartments, its variety of walks and drives, and the perfect liberty, as to occupation and amusement, which prevailed there. Lady Emily's insipidity was forgotten in the recollection of her good-nature ; even Lord St. Maur was remembered with less bitterness ; for, at any rate, he had been considerate in sickness ; but General Moubray had no idea of young people complaining ; and when, worn out with listening to his never-ending grumbling, she sometimes, and with truth, pleaded headache as an excuse to escape the nightly three hours chess-playing, and received a peremptory refusal, our heroine could not but remember the evening she had spent tête-à-tête with her guardian, and the game he had lost with so much good temper.

And this was the fulfilment of Cecil's brilliant hopes ; this, the relative, whose return had been so anxiously expected ; this, the enchanted home, where, surrounded by every comfort, every

luxury, Cecil had pictured her future life as one continued round of joy and happiness. She thought of her fallen castles, and sighed ; of the future, and her heart sank within her, for she saw no prospect of improvement. General Moubray had no intention of occupying Eldersleigh, still less did he meditate a town residence ; both were, in fact, far too expensive for one whose sole remaining pleasure was to hoard.

Cecil Moubray had placed her happiness on a wrong foundation.

CHAPTER III.

IT was a bright, sunny, March morning, and Cecil's task of reading aloud having received a temporary interruption by the entrance of her uncle's usual luncheon, a bowl of arrow-root, she retreated to the other end of the room, for the benefit of three inches of open window. The heat was indeed oppressive ; for the house had a southern aspect, and the rays of a mid-day sun found little impediment in the venetians, which certainly appeared to have been intended more for show than use. One objected to letting itself down above half-way ; another had three

wide gaps in its surface, while the third presented the exact appearance of a large unfurled green fan, in consequence of one of its lines having given way, while the corresponding cord remained immovably hitched at the top.

“Cecil,” said General Moubray, “I don’t altogether fancy this arrow-root; did you desire Mason to be careful about boiling it up?”

“I did, indeed, uncle; I spoke more than once to her.”

“Then she has’nt attended to you, that’s all I can say; and if Mrs. Mason expects that I am to give her twenty guineas a year for such performances as this, she will find herself very much mistaken, I can tell her. Wretched stuff, indeed; can’t have put in half the arrow-root, that’s it, depend upon it; kept it for herself; servants are all cheats and thieves.”

“Will you try another bason?”

“No, my stomach’s turned already.”

“Some broth, then?”

“Don’t know but I might be able to manage

a little broth ; and you can make your luncheon off this." " And then," thought he, " she will not want so much dinner."

" Thank you, my dear uncle, but I am not hungry ; I have just eaten a biscuit."

" Well, never mind, don't pull the bell ; I dare say this is better for me than broth," said the General, who could not make up his mind to the enormous waste of a bason of arrow-root. " Here, take this key, and open the closet in my bedroom, you'll find a bottle of brandy there. Dr. B. advises me to take a little with my luncheon."

Miss Moubray obeyed. " Take care, for goodness' sake, pray think of what you are about ; do you want to throw me into a fever ? There—that will do ; one spoonful more. Where are you going now, Cecil ? Leave the bottle on the table ; how can you tell I shall not want some more. And do sit still ; that perpetual opening and shutting of the door is enough to drive one mad.

Cecil returned to her former station near the

window. No two human faces are alike ; no two people write alike ; no two persons give a similar knock at a door ; and at this moment, there was a rap at the street door, which Cecil had often heard before, and never with much pleasure. The next minute a low, deep voice, inquired for General Moubray.

“Uncle, dear uncle,” she cried, starting up, “your dressing-gown, your slippers ; won’t you change your dress ?”

“Hey, what ?” said the General, who thought his niece a little non compos. “What in the name of wonder is the matter with the girl ?”

“Lord St. Maur is below ; pray put on your coat.”

“Who ?” asked the General.

“Lord St. Maur.”

“And what brings him here, I should like to know ? I’m sure I don’t want to see him.”

“Shall I deny you ?” cried Cecil ; but it was too late, the Earl was already in the room. And such a room ! Reader, I do not often trouble

you with descriptions, but this apartment I must endeavour to portray. General Moubray occupied a house in the Promenade, the back drawing-room of which had been converted into his bed-room; for, as Lady Emily observed, he did not like moving about; and the folding doors being partially unclosed, gave to view his coat hanging over the back of a chair, several pairs of boots and shoes, and other articles of clothing, scattered about the room, and a tumbled bed, which the lodging-house servant had not yet found time to arrange. The drawing-room itself was neither better nor worse than lodging-house drawing-rooms usually are; but as the General *did* the invalid, there were some additions, in the shape of phials and pill-boxes, which might have been dispensed with. His own appearance, too, in a faded buff dressing-gown, and slippers, (in one of which a large hole had been made, to favour a corn,) was far from being ornamental; while the odour imparted to the atmosphere of the apartment by the

cognac, was not exactly the perfume you expect to meet with in a lady's drawing-room.

Cecil coloured with vexation, as she saw (or thought she saw) their unwelcome visitant cast a rapid, satirical glance, at the *comforts*, and *elegances*, by which they were surrounded; and perhaps there *was* a wicked expression about his mouth, as, after the customary inquiries, he asked Miss Moubray, "if Cheltenham answered her expectations?"

"No," said the General (who was a little deaf), "I can't say it does: drank the waters when first I came; thought they did me more harm than good; left them off now; wish I'd not tried them at all; paid my subscription for six months, and all for no purpose; might as well have thrown my money into the sea."

"You have, at any rate, a very cheerful situation?"

"Yes, it's pleasant enough, for those who like the thing; doesn't suit me; too much noise and bustle; monstrous dear, too. Would you believe

it, my Lord? they have the conscience to ask five guineas a week now, and it will be double in what is called the season!"

"House rent is always high at watering places, I believe," observed the Earl, not exactly knowing what to answer.

"But that's not the worst of it," rejoined General Moubray; "They have a confounded practice here of putting a servant into the house, whom you are expected to take, and the waste and extravagance of such a system is enough to drive a man out of his senses. All servants are bad enough; but one who feels herself a fixture is a perfect mass of dishonesty, and everything else that's unprincipled; however, I've made up my mind, now, to put them all on board wages: eight shillings a week for the women, and twelve for the men; and if they don't like it, they may take themselves off, a set of idle, good-for-nothing knaves, who eat one out of house and home, and think of nothing from morning till night but how they can cheat and deceive you."

Again did Cecil colour with mortification, as she stole a glance at her titled guardian ; but his countenance gave no token of exultation. In fact, Lord St. Maur's errand to Cheltenham was not one of ill-natured triumph, and if a slight shade of malice had appeared on his first entrance, it had been entirely called up by the coldness of her reception ; and now, far from enjoying, he pitied her embarrassment. Something was said of business, and Cecil gladly seized the excuse for leaving the room.

“ What can all this be about ? ” thought she, laying down a book, with which she had vainly endeavoured to occupy herself—“ What can he be saying to my uncle ? He has been here nearly an hour ; and there is the fly ; my uncle is always so angry when it is kept waiting ; how I wish he would have horses, like other people, instead of using those odious little carriages ; ” and Cecil sighed, for that, she felt, was not the only point in which a similarity to others would have improved her relative. Another half-hour

passed, and still the voices from the room below grated harshly on her ear. Lord St. Maur was evidently the spokesman; for the continuous tones of his low, manly voice, were but occasionally interrupted by an inquiry, or expression of surprise, from General Moubray.

Cecil's nervousness became extreme. "I fear there is something amiss; surely, surely it cannot be that he is complaining of me? Yes," she continued, after thinking awhile, "I dare say it is so. As if my life were not sufficiently uncomfortable, this unkind, disagreeable man, is trying to set my uncle more against me. But what is this?" taking a small parcel from her dressing table. "The ribbon for my bonnet, I suppose. How frightful! I do think Mason might have chosen something prettier; but, perhaps, she could get nothing better for the money." And Cecil sighed once more as she thought of her all but empty purse.

Soon after her arrival in Cheltenham, General Moubray had given her a *five pound* note,

accompanied with so many lectures on her past extravagance, and exhortations to economise in future, that she dreaded the moment when another application would be necessary. "I wonder why Mason doesn't come," said Miss Moubray ; "it's very strange she shouldn't hear the bell." Mason, however, *did* hear ; but she was far too agreeably employed to think of obeying the summons, being snugly ensconced in the General's bed-room, and, consequently, overhearing the entire conversation between the gentlemen.

Lord St. Maur's visit was at length concluded ; and Cecil and her uncle, being seated in the above-mentioned fly, they drove towards the High Street in place of taking a country direction, as they usually did.

"A very sensible man, that Lord St. Maur," observed the General ; "although I must acknowledge I don't agree with him in every respect. Young noblemen, however, have extravagant notions ; he'll be wiser when he is older,

I dare say, and think, as I do, that a hundred and seventy pounds is a great deal for a young lady to spend in little more than nine months."

"Indeed, my dear uncle, if I had had the slightest idea you would have been displeased, I should have been more prudent."

"Well, well, there is no use in talking about it; the money's gone, and had better be forgotten. And, now I think about, I suppose you wont object to a little more; eh, Cecil?" presenting her with two greasy five pound country notes, which were received with infinite satisfaction.

They now stopped at a confectioner's, where General Moubray ordered six cheesecakes, as many tartlets, a shape of jelly, and a pigeon pie, to be sent home immediately. Then they drove to the Plough, where Cecil's uncle alighted; for his business respected wine, and he had still enough of gentleman-like feeling remaining to be choice in that article. In getting out, he desired the driver (for he had no livery servant) to

open the fly, an injunction which, after many jerks to the carriage, and sohos to the horse, was at length obeyed, and Cecil exposed to public view. She, however, attracted very little notice ; for who could have guessed the plainly-dressed occupant of the hackney fly, who seemed so anxious to escape observation, was no other person than the beautiful heiress of Eldersleigh.

“ I hope I have the pleasure of seeing Miss Moubray well,” said William Beauclerc, who, with his arm linked in that of Lord St. Maur, approached the vehicle in which she sat. A favourable reply brought forth a long string of inquiries, as to her leaving Cheltenham, arrival in town, situation there, probable gaieties of the approaching season, &c. &c., in answering which poor Cecil crimsoned again with mortification, and right glad was she when her uncle’s appearance put an end to the conversation.

Flys are awkward carriages to enter, especially for stout, heavy people, to which description of persons General Moubray belonged ; and being,

also, rather inactive, he missed his footing, and might have had a very disagreeable fall but for the prompt intervention of Lord St. Maur's arm, and even Cecil could not but remark the look of real concern which accompanied this timely aid.

"Pray," said General Moubray, when they were once more in motion, "is that gentleman related to the Earl? They are very much alike."

"His first cousin,—Mr. Beauclerc."

"An admirer of yours, Cecil? [Young ladies always say no when such questions are asked.] I think he looked a little sweet upon you, though. Do you suppose they are together?"

"Most probably."

"Then I wish I had thought of asking him too. Why did you not introduce me, Cecil?"

"Asked him, uncle? Asked him?" inquired Miss Moubray, an uncomfortable sort of apprehension stealing over her mind.

"Yes; asked him," replied the General, testily.

“ But to what ? ”

“ To dinner, to be sure. Didn't I tell you that Lord St. Maur is coming to dine with us ? ”

“ Lord St. Maur coming to dine with us ? Oh, my dear uncle ! ”

“ Yes,” replied he, “ Lord St. Maur *is* coming to dine with us. But what ails you, Cecil ? Why, child, if it had been a rhinoceros, you could not have looked more frightened. What in the world is the matter with you ? Are you ill ? ”

“ No,” she said, “ I am not ill ; but you know Lord St. Maur is accustomed to so much refinement and luxury, and our style of living is quite the reverse.”

“ I really don't know what you mean, Miss Moubray ! ”

“ Nay, uncle ; lodging houses are always deficient in comforts.”

“ Well,” said the General, “ I suppose Lord St. Maur has dined in a lodging house before ; so tell the man to take another turn, and do you

keep a sharp look-out, you know my eyesight is defective, and if you see Mr. Beauclerc, we will stop, and give him an invitation."

"It wanted but this," thought she, "to complete my annoyance. Oh, how could my uncle be so injudicious." And Cecil well nigh cried with vexation, as she contrasted the spacious dining-room, the snowy damask, the massive plate, the rich liveries, French cuisine, foreign wines, forced dessert, and costly porcelain, of Selwood Castle, with the niggardly repast dressed by a lodging house cook, served on *blue* and *white* dishes, and with her uncle's man the sole attendant. The tartlets, too! Lord St. Maur eating tartlets! It would be worse, a thousand times worse, than the most unfortunate of Mrs. Henrietta's failures.

They reached home (as may be supposed) without hailing William Beauclerc; and then a new difficulty arose: what was Miss Moubray to wear? At Selwood a very *recherchée* toilette had prevailed, for Lord St. Maur was rather a connoisseur in ladies' dresses; but how ridiculous

would such a style appear now. This point, however, was soon arranged ; and Cecil, full of flutter and agitation, entered the drawing-room, when, to her inexpressible relief, she found that all her fears had been unnecessary ; Lord St. Maur, aware, perhaps, on after consideration of the consequences of thus rashly engaging himself, had sent an excuse.

“ So, Cecil,” said her uncle, “ I see you can dress yourself for a young man, though you don’t think an old one worth the trouble. However, your labour’s lost, for he doesn’t come after all ; I can’t say I consider it altogether gentlemanlike, but I suppose these great people fancy they may do as they please. Perhaps, too, it’s better he doesn’t dine with us, I dare say I should have been obliged to drink more wine than would have been good for me ; the pigeon pie, you know, will keep very well till to-morrow. It’s lucky I did not order giblet soup as well.”

The evening passed pleasantly, for conversation superseded the tedious chess table. And

General Moubray, with more apparent kindness than had hitherto marked his manner towards his niece (at least since his return to England), asked a multitude of questions respecting Selwood, its inhabitants and neighbours, which Cecil, delighted with the favourable change in her capricious relative, answered with much cheerfulness. She spoke of the beauty of the place; praised Lady Emily's unvarying good temper, Sir Thomas's benevolence, and described Mary as a perfect paragon. With respect to Lord St. Maur, she was more reserved, for, although disliking him nearly as much as ever, she considered his having defended her from the imputation of extravagance demanded forbearance on her part. Beyond, therefore, the admission of his being considered a kind landlord, liberal relation, and most affectionate father, General Moubray could extract nothing from his niece.

"Humph," said the eccentric old gentleman, half aloud, after she had retired for the

night, "I wonder what's the reason she's so close; can hardly get her to say a word about him. He's a good-looking fellow that; younger than I thought; says she's not extravagant; the only man in England who would say so, I'll be bound."

"Cecil," said the General, the following day, "if you like to go to church this afternoon there's no objection." Cecil was greatly surprised, for hitherto she had with difficulty obtained leave to attend the morning service.

"But your drive, my dear uncle?"

"The days are getting longer now; I will order the fly later, and take you up after the service."

Cecil gladly availed herself of the permission, and having given Mason orders to be particularly attentive to her uncle during her absence, set off, followed by Wilcox (General Moubray's man.) The service was concluded, and she left the church, but no fly, no General, appeared. "This is very singular," thought she,

growing confused and nervous at finding herself alone in the crowd. "I fear something must have happened, for even had my uncle changed his intention of driving out, he would certainly have desired Wilcox to come for me, as he always does." And, dreading she knew not exactly what, Miss Moubray hurried home.

Her apprehensions were, however, soon allayed, for within a few paces of the door she met Lord St. Maur, who had been calling, and thus had detained her uncle.

The Earl stopped and accosted her, and while answering a few unimportant remarks, she was struck by a singularly amused expression in his countenance. "Hem," thought he, after they had parted, again piqued by the distance of her manner, "it's a pity, Miss Cecil, you ——. And yet, no, I would not have her know it for the whole world, poor girl! she has annoyances enough already. How pretty she looks in that quiet bonnet; perhaps, after all, she did not go to church twice only to tease me."

Soon after, Lord St. Maur left Cheltenham, and as he travelled during the greatest part of the night, fell asleep, and dreamt he had risen to address the House on a question of vital importance to the nation; when on the woolsack he beheld—not the venerable Eldon, nor the astute Lyndhurst, nor versatile Brougham, nor any other Lord Chancellor ever known or heard of; but in the wig and gown of that official, his pretty provoking ward; and ere he could recover his astonishment at this extraordinary apparition, the whole house rose in a very disorderly manner, and rushing simultaneously towards the intruder, several awkward accidents occurred; the Duke of W——n and Earl G——y rolled together on the ground, locked in a fond embrace; and Earl S——r actually lost his temper, in consequence of the ponderous bishop of ——, standing upon him for at least a quarter of an hour. “Never again,” exclaimed the witty Lord M——, while assisting to right the almost flattened nobleman, “never let it again

be said, the Whigs have not upheld the Church !”

Whilst the house is before us, I cannot refrain from making an observation or two on the system so prevalent of misrepresenting the upper classes. According to many writers of the day, every member of the high aristocracy may be considered either as Folly’s self; or as a sort of animated pandemonium. But is this a correct view? Undoubtedly not; and I cannot but think that the persons with whom it originates know little of human nature and human life. That there are many foolish and profligate peers no one can deny, and, unfortunately, as “straws swim on the top, while pearls sink to the bottom;” these attract attention, while the good, the virtuous, and the respected, pass unnoticed; but to anathematize the whole race of our nobility for the misconduct of a few, is surely gross injustice. Let it also be remembered, that if, yielding to the peculiar temptations of his position, the peer has his vices,

neither is the peasant without his crimes ; for both are weak and fallible ; and while we stigmatize the folly, extravagance, and immorality, of some of our nobles, let us not forget the courage, the patronage of learning, the munificence, by which, as a body, they have ever been distinguished. Nor should we, while regretting the blindness and folly which does unfortunately attach to a portion of our hereditary legislators, overlook the talent which has thrown, and does throw, on many a noble house, a lustre far eclipsing all ancestral honours.

Can we forget that brilliant, yet perverted mind, whose poet's wreath rested upon a coroneted brow ; that *he*, before whose mighty genius the master spirit of the age went down, springs from no common stock ; or, that the eloquent pleader, to whom we owe the graceful phrase, "the *mute* creation," was nobly born. Many more instances might be quoted ; but my digression is long enough.

CHAPTER IV.

CECIL MOUBRAY spent no more pleasant evenings ; there was, it is true, less of actual unkindness in her uncle's manner towards her, and she was no longer subject to the same rigorous restraint ; but his moroseness and ill-temper appeared to increase daily. One person, only, possessed the slightest influence over the selfish old man ; and that individual was the wife of the gentleman who had filled the situation originally intended for Armstrong. This lady, who arrived at Cheltenham a few days after Lord St. Maur's visit, was a very

distant connexion of General Moubray's mother, who, in consequence of her having contracted a *mésalliance*, had formerly been scarcely noticed ; but, as the proverb says, " It is an ill wind that blows nobody good," and, in the embarrassment caused by Henry's fickleness, his appointment was offered to Captain Johnson, simply because, on the spur of the moment, General Moubray could find no one else to fill it.

The offer was accepted with avidity, for the Johnsons were needy people ; and in process of time, the lady contrived to make herself so exceedingly agreeable to the veteran, that one or two over-scrupulous persons began to doubt the propriety of countenancing such proceedings, and were not sorry when the question of visiting, or not visiting, was set at rest, by General Moubray's recal. She was a smart, dressy looking person, with black, unmeaning, bead-like eyes, a sharp nose, and fresh colour, large mouth and good teeth ; she laughed and

talked a great deal, was altogether totally unlike anybody with whom Cecil had ever before associated, and in her opinion very disagreeable. But as Mrs. Johnson's object was to please General Moubray, not his niece, she seldom failed to make a daily call, notwithstanding the cold reception she met with from our heroine; and Cecil, in addition to the mortification of having lost all interest in her uncle's affections, could not blind herself to the ascendancy this unprincipled woman had obtained over the weak old man. Hers was, indeed, a very trying position; but the least happy seasons of our existence are sometimes the most profitable; since what the furnace is to gold, and the refining pot to silver, is trial to the human heart. And whilst Miss Moubray's beauty waned, her spirits sank, even her health declined, under the many annoyances to which she was daily subjected, her better principles gained strength, her character softened,

her mind acquired a deeper tone, and her piety became more fixed and influential.

Early in May, a family, including *ten* children, with the necessary complement of servants, took possession of the adjoining house, and proved such troublesome neighbours that General Moubray determined upon changing his domicile. He had rather declined in health, also, latterly, and his medical man advised change of air ; Cecil, delighted at the prospect of leaving a place she had found so disagreeable, suggested Eldersleigh ; but of that her uncle would not even hear. Malvern was then proposed, and with apparent success ; but Mrs. Johnson, who happened to come in during the discussion, raised so many objections, that the idea was relinquished. In fact, this lady had engaged her house for three months, and neither fancied sacrificing the money, nor running the risk of losing her influence by remaining behind ; she would therefore rather have de-

tained him altogether in Cheltenham ; but General Moubray had determined upon leaving the place, and even Mrs. Johnson could not make him give up his resolution entirely : her only policy, then, was to keep him still in the neighbourhood.

At length, by dint of the most unremitting inquiries, she ascertained that a family residing in one of the adjacent villages were desirous of letting their house for the ensuing six months ; and as the rent was moderate, General Moubray was easily persuaded to become the tenant.

Great were the benefits of this change to Cecil ; she found in her new abode a small, but well-selected library ; and, when not in attendance on her uncle, it was real enjoyment to perambulate the little garden and shrubbery ; or, accompanied by Mason, stroll in the adjoining lanes and fields. Sometimes, too, she entered the dwellings of her humbler neighbours ; but such calls were not frequent ; for beyond a kind word, or encouraging look, she

had little to bestow ; and in these days, when the poor have as many visitors as the rich, those who come empty-handed are not always welcome. Nor can we wonder that it should be so ; his time and labour are the poor man's wealth ; is it therefore surprising that he cannot see the one interrupted, or the other lost, without expecting some equivalent ?

There was, however, one cottage, where her entrance was greeted with delight ; one sufferer, whose heated, feverish countenance, never failed to brighten, as, with stealthy step, and subdued voice and manner, Miss Moubray advanced to her bedside. Alice Merton had been in service, but a neglected cold terminating in consumption, she was now speedily to enter that country, " from whose bourne no traveller returns." Much had she to contend with on her dying bed ; for if sickness be hard to bear, even when softened by every alleviation, every luxury ; what must it be, where, as in this case, even the necessities of life are wanting? Yes

—sickness is a bitter portion, and sickness linked with poverty more trying still ; to know that remedies exist, but not for you ; and soothing palliatives, but they are beyond you ; that suffering is, and is to be, your lot, for you are poor, and cannot purchase ease ; and then to think how little of the gold which heartless worldlings squander on their vain pleasures would give relief. Did I say worldlings ? Is it alone the worldling, then, who shuts his heart against the suffering of his fellow-worm ? No, no ; the Priest, the Levite, also, saw the wounded man, and turned aside.

Alice Merton's mind, and feelings, too, were superior to her station, and rendered her more keenly alive to some of the evils of her lot ; for the relatives with whom she lived considered her an incumbrance, and took no pains to conceal this opinion ; not that they were absolutely unfeeling, but, coarse and thoughtless, would not themselves have heeded such a declaration, had they exchanged places with the dying

sufferer. But she bore all with patient resignation ; she knew her days on earth were numbered ; and what were the evils of the present time, compared with the glorious heritage she would soon possess ? To this poor creature, Cecil's visits gave real comfort ; for religion had done for her what genuine piety will always effect ; in sanctifying her feelings it had refined her taste, and *she* could prize even the little basket of fresh flowers, all, in fact, frequently, Miss Moubray could offer. And then, after a feverish night, or day of weariness and pain, how soothing were the promises of holy writ softly pronounced by one whose voice was melody itself ; and as Cecil knelt by the bedside, or smoothed the pillow, of that peasant girl, she was perhaps more truly lovely than when, in all the pride and flush of beauty, she had seen the noble and the high-born bow before her.

Time has rolled on ;—Alice is at rest, and none mourn for her. To her sordid relatives her

death was a relief ; even Cecil, while contemplating the calm beauty of the lifeless features, on which a smile of holy gladness still lingered, could not but acknowledge, that to the departed death had been gain indeed !

“ Uncle,” said Cecil, one Sabbath afternoon, shortly after Alice’s decease, “ as you are too unwell to drive out to-day, shall I not read to you ? You were, I thought, interested in this book.”

“ Pray excuse me, my dear Miss Moubray,” interrupted Mrs. Johnson, “ but I must put my veto on such reading. Religion is, undoubtedly, very desirable in its proper place, and when not carried too far ; but I must say I think such books as that you hold in your hand likely to do a great deal of mischief, especially to a person in General Moubray’s state of health. I believe I’m not at all deficient in real piety myself, and make a point of going to church *once* a day, at least ; but Methodism I do abhor, for I never knew one of your very good people who

wasn't at heart quite as bad, if not worse, than others. And I really believe you labour under a great mistake in considering so much strictness necessary."

"Are you quite charitable, Mrs. Johnson, in condemning *all* religious people, because you have met with some hypocrites?"

"Well," said the General, "you'll never make a saint of me, Cecil; so you may as well give up the attempt. I got such a surfeit of church-going when I was a boy at Eton, and afterwards at Oxford, that I took a disgust to the whole thing. Faith, I believe I haven't seen the inside of a church since I left the University, excepting, indeed, when my brother was married; and I quite agree with you, Mrs. Johnson, that religion is likely to do more harm than good."

"Besides," continued that lady, "are we not told not to be righteous overmuch? Now I must acknowledge, that though it is Sunday, I can't see the harm of a little quiet enjoyment ;

sick people should be amused ; they require to have their spirits raised, which, I am sure, such reading would never do ; and as General Moubray can't go out this afternoon, we really ought to try and make the time pass pleasantly ; so, General, *I* propose a game at backgammon."

"Thank you, my dear, kind friend," replied the infatuated old man, as the artful Mrs. Johnson busied herself in placing the men.

"It was not thus," thought Cecil, whilst slowly ascending the stairs, "my poor mother's hours of suffering were cheered ; how dreadful it appears, that one in my uncle's state of health should be so indifferent to his best interests ; Mrs. Johnson, it is quite clear, is using all her endeavours to keep him back. What can it be that gives her such an influence over him ?"

Cecil took up a book, and, placing herself on the window seat, began reading. She had not, however, been long thus occupied, when her attention was attracted by a loud scream from

below stairs, and a violent peal of the bell. In an instant she gained the room where she had left her uncle, and dreadful was the spectacle that presented itself, but which, in the horror of the moment, Cecil could not realize. A fearful sound fell upon her ear, but she knew not its full import ; an appalling vision rose upon her view, but conveyed no impression to her mind ; she rushed forward, something cold met her touch, and then a dizziness came over her ; and sight, sense, hearing, feeling—all were gone.

For some time past, General Moubray had been liable to seizures, which he called nervous ; for, although always complaining, death, or even danger, were contingencies, whose bare idea he carefully excluded from his imagination. Yet thus was he called away ; and oh ! how sudden, how awful, was the summons : sudden, because, in spite of many warnings, he met it unprepared ; awful, since, even in death, his palsied hand still grasped the instrument of the unhallowed pas-

time wherewith he had dared to desecrate that holy day. He died as he had lived, a worldly, God-forgetting man.

It was some hours before the sense of consciousness returned to Cecil ; and as she became gradually aware of the appalling event which had so recently occurred, bitter, indeed, were her reflections. She had seen her gentle, uncomplaining mother, through years of suffering, patiently awaiting her release. She had witnessed the triumphant joy with which, as on a seraph's wing, Alice's glad spirit sought the realms of bliss ; and in both instances, death had no sting, the grave no victory : but how different was her uncle's case ; there all was dark, despairing, comfortless. And while deploring the miserable end of this her nearest relative, the dislike she had always entertained for Mrs. Johnson ripened into aversion ; for she could not but consider her as having materially encouraged the utter disregard he had evinced to every sacred duty ; and

she was glad that the positive injunction of quiet, from her medical man, gave a reasonable excuse for declining that lady's society.

It was not until the third day after General Moubray's demise that Cecil found herself equal to the exertion of writing a few lines to Lady Emily, informing her of the awful catastrophe ; and as her ladyship was not a very ready scribe, several days more had elapsed before an answer was received. It was exceedingly concise, and written rather in a congratulatory than condoling strain ; for Lady Emily considered the old General's death the very best thing that could happen for his niece. Cecil was invited to return immediately to Selwood ; Lord St. Maur was at present absent, but hourly expected to come home ; and Louisa, who had been married about three weeks, like the generality of people of her matrimonial experience, described herself, in her letters to her mother, as being perfectly happy. Such were the contents of Lady Emily War-

ham's epistle; but ere it reached its destination, another heavy blow had fallen on Cecil—she was disinherited!

During General Moubray's absence from England a new will had been made, by which, after some annuities and legacies, (one of five thousand pounds to his niece, payable upon her coming of age,) the whole of his property, landed and personal, was bequeathed to Mrs. Johnson.

Cecil was not covetous; but from her early youth she had been taught to consider herself the future mistress of Eldersleigh; as such, she had been educated; as such, introduced into society; and it was impossible not to feel the reverse which, from a high-born heiress, reduced her to what was, in her estimation, little better than beggary. Nor could she see, without a pang, the estate and dwelling of her ancestors pass into the hands of strangers. Her uncle assigned no reason for his fickle injustice; but would it not, she feared, be thought, that some misconduct on her part had given rise to this

change of purpose. Even the name which at his desire she had taken, would henceforth prove a constant source of mortification and ridicule. She felt herself degraded and disgraced, and it was with some difficulty she could bring her naturally proud spirit to bow, with any degree of submission, to so humiliating a dispensation. And her distress received additional poignancy from the entire want of respect evinced towards her uncle's memory by the worthless being whom he had so unjustly enriched.

On Mrs. Johnson, her husband, and brother, as sole executors of the will, devolved the arrangement for General Moubray's interment ; and she who was indebted to him for a landed estate of six thousand a year, besides funded property to a considerable amount, now begrudged (for the unworthy are seldom grateful) the trifling expense which would be incurred by conveying her benefactor's mortal remains to the burial-place of his forefathers. Cecil had been called upon to deliver up the diamonds, as they

were, she was assured, part of the personal estate; and she hesitated not to comply with the demand; but she could not suffer the preparations for the funeral to proceed without a remonstrance; but in vain. Mrs. Johnson hated the being she had injured; she was glad, too, of an opportunity of retaliating the coldness with which she had been treated by Miss Moubray, and would not hear of any alteration from the original plan;—and without a stone to mark his final resting-place, with scarcely the appearance even of decent respect, the remains of the proud, ambitious, worldly-minded General Moubray, were consigned to the burial-ground of an obscure country village.

Ah! what a lesson for mortality is here! For many years, ambition had been the mainspring of his life; self-aggrandisement the object of his existence. For *these* General Moubray had sacrificed his political integrity; for *these* had braved the dangers of an unhealthy climate; and it was chiefly the irritation arising from dis-

appointed pride which led to the commission of that act of base injustice by which he degraded and impoverished his brother's orphan. Such had been the career of this proud, selfish being ; yet were his latter days without honour, and he died unrespected, unregretted, unmourned, save by his injured niece.

There are two graves in that churchyard lying together, and they are alike ; the turf grows equally, the village children sport, on both ; the careless footstep presses the springy sward, and marks no difference between the mound beneath which rests the high-born statesman, or that where sleeps the lowly peasant,—for the rich and poor are met together,—the worldly-minded Moubray and the humble Alice are side by side. There is no difference now ; but how will it be when the dead shall rise, the books be opened, and each shall render an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil ; when every sin of omission and commission, every neglected duty,

every heartless action, now, perhaps, forgotten or glossed over, shall set themselves in terrible array, provoking the justice of an offended God. Reader ! in that dread hour, say, how will you and I appear ?

As Mrs. Johnson, immediately on General Moubray's death, had established herself in his late residence, Cecil, it may be easily imagined, felt little desire to prolong unnecessarily her sojourn under the same roof. She resolved, therefore, although in a state of extreme weakness, to quit Cheltenham directly after the funeral, notwithstanding she must thus become the herald of her misfortunes ; for Lady Emily's letter only reached Cheltenham on the morning of that painful occurrence. But previous to her departure some arrangements were necessary, which brought forcibly to the mind of our heroine the melancholy change her fortunes had undergone. She was not entitled to the legacy until of age ; and as General Moubray's penurious habits had not decreased, she now found

herself with but a few shillings to defray the expenses of the journey, and discharge some outstanding bills for mourning and other necessities. She preferred parting with some of her least valued trinkets to the degradation of borrowing from the Johnsons; and Mason was accordingly despatched to negotiate the sale. Cecil knew not the difference of buying and selling such articles, especially when the agent is one of Mason's description; and her amazement was excessive, when, in return for ornaments which might, originally, have cost upwards of a hundred pounds, she received thirty; and that sum being little more than sufficient to satisfy her tradespeople, another sacrifice was necessary. At length, after having all but emptied her jewel case, she was enabled to pay her bills, and set off for Selwood.

The distressing events of the preceding week had so entirely engrossed Miss Moubray's mind, to the exclusion of every other subject, that it was not until she had fairly left Cheltenham

that the consideration of her future plans forced itself upon her attention. There was little cheering in the prospect, or, I should rather say, it was full of difficulties ; for the next few months her residence must be at Selwood Castle ; but what would be her destination when that period expired ? She had, doubtless, relations, on both sides of the family ; but they were distant. And (to say nothing of her being almost a stranger to them) *distant*, or even *near* relations, are not always warm-hearted friends when their good services are likely to be called forth. Of Mrs. Armstrong's friendship Cecil had no doubt, and she was satisfied she might have found a home with that truly estimable person ; but Henry's flirting propensities having, at length, opened Sophia's eyes to his real character, the match was broken off, and as he nominally resided with his parents, Cecil felt that she must look elsewhere for an asylum. The same objection would prevail, though, perhaps, in a less degree, with respect to Caroline,

even should Mr. Hartfield profess a willingness to receive her as an inmate of his house. Nor could she, without considerable anxiety, contemplate the season she must necessarily spend at Selwood. "What," she tremulously asked herself, "would be her reception there? now that her altered fortunes placed her, as it were, so much below the level of those who usually entered that stately mansion? And, above all, what degree of severity and unkindness might she not henceforward expect from her terrific guardian?" For Cecil, no longer doubting his assertions respecting the injunctions he had received from General Moubray, could not but allow that her conduct towards Lord St. Maur had been highly reprehensible. She recollected, too, that *he* had shewn a wish for a reconciliation, which, in her foolish pride, had been rejected with ill-disguised disdain; and would he not remember, would he not resent, such an indignity? Alas! it was but too probable. And, sick at heart, weak in body, sinking under her

many sorrows, it was with difficulty Cecil Moubray summoned resolution to continue her journey; so much did she dread encountering her offended guardian, so deeply did she feel the painful mortification of returning to a place and neighbourhood she had left under such very different circumstances.

Poverty is no crime; yet is it a disgrace—a degradation. Who loves the poor relation? Who welcomes the impoverished friend? Who soothes the needy invalid? Few, few, indeed; for if “all the brethren of the poor do hate him, how much more do his friends go from him.” Poverty is no crime—yet was Cecil acutely alive to the humiliation of her altered circumstances; and a burning blush of shame crimsoned her pallid cheeks, as, in a wretched, jingling hack chaise, she was rattled up to the entrance of the magnificent abode she was about once more to enter.

“What an insipid work is this!” cries Miss Sighaway. “Here we are, in the second

volume, and we have not had one single tender scene. I don't think I shall finish it ; a book without love is not worth the trouble of reading. How different from Henrietta Temple !”

“I cry your patience, dear young lady ; remember, I beseech you, every writer is not a D'Israeli.”

“Besides,” adds another reader, “your descriptions are faulty ; for it is a received maxim, that women with alabaster foreheads, and blue eyes, shaded with long dark eyelashes, are all gentleness and softness.”

“In novels, perhaps, it may be so ; but believe me, my fair critic, there are in reality as many blue eyed viragos, as black ; not, however, that Cecil Moubray belonged legitimately to either class ; since hers was a *proud*, not a *bad* temper.”

“I suppose,” adds one of the male generation, “you are aware that nobody cares for a girl without fortune ; and therefore, if you mean any of *us* to take an interest in Miss Moubray, instead of losing hers, it ought, like a snowball,

to have increased continually. But perhaps some distant rich relation will return from India ; or some benevolent, elderly gentleman, will take a violent fancy to your heroine, adopt, and leave her five times the money she has lost."

"I have no doubt Cecil would have been extremely glad of such an instance of good luck ; but, unhappily, although the desirable persons you describe abound in works of fiction ; in real life, like prizes in a lottery, they are of rare occurrence."

"At any rate," observes an antiquated prude, "there being no longer any necessity for Miss Moubray's bearing a masculine name, I suppose she will in future drop it ; a woman should carefully avoid anything in the least unfeminine."

"I perfectly agree with you ; and I believe Cecil would not have felt the slightest objection to the change you mention, inasmuch as her present name appeared like a perpetual memento of her fallen prospects ; but, as she was to spend some months at Selwood, she did not

deem it advisable to render her unfortunate likeness to her cousin still more striking.”

“I do wish you would not lose so much time,” says a damsel of fifteen, whose reading, having been hitherto restricted to drier studies, is sufficiently *unsophisticated*, (Have I not *Hooked* in that word with much adroitness?)—is, I say, sufficiently unsophisticated, to take an interest in this simple tale ;—“I do wish you would not talk so much, but get on with the story. I want to know whether Lord St. Maur was very cross to poor Cecil ; and if any of the straw stuck to the bottom of her dress after she got out of the postchaise.”

“My dear little friend, you shall be obeyed.”

CHAPTER V.

THE last few months of General Moubray's existence had been spent in such entire seclusion, that it was not until his return home, a few hours previous to Cecil's arrival, that Lord St. Maur heard of the old gentleman's decease. He was exceedingly displeased at Lady Emily's in-ertness, and resolved on starting for Cheltenham without delay. The necessary orders were accordingly given, and he busied himself in answering some letters of importance; nor did Cecil's approach occasion any interruption; for he little guessed who occupied the humble vehicle which attracted his momentary attention.

“ Papa, papa,” cried Lady Mary, bursting into the library, “ Cecil’s come back ; she is, indeed.”

“ Well, my dear,” said her father, “ you need not be so boisterous. When did Miss Moubray return ? I saw no carriage pass by the window.”

“ Just now, papa ; and she was obliged to come in a nasty old postchaise, for that wicked General Moubray has taken away all her money except five pounds.”

“ Mary,” said the Earl, turning deadly pale, “ you can’t know what you are talking about ; it’s impossible ; you must be mistaken.”

“ No, indeed, papa, it’s quite true ; I assure you it is. Cecil has been telling all about it, and aunt Emily cried ; and she’s very ill, indeed.”

At this moment Lady Emily entered the room, her eyes fully corroborating the truth of Mary’s assertions.

“Emily, said her brother, “what’s all this I hear? Is it possible General Moubray has acted so cruelly?”

“Oh, St. Maur, did you ever hear anything like it? The most scandalous conduct: he ought to be hanged!” At another time, Lord St. Maur might, perhaps, have reminded his sister, that, as General Moubray was already dead and buried, such an act of retribution would hardly be necessary; but, far too much agitated to notice the absurdity of her remark, he merely repeated his inquiry.

“Yes,” she replied, “everything is left to a Mrs. Johnson,—horrid woman!”

“Everything, Emily? Has he left everything away? Not even a legacy to Cecil?”

“Yes, papa,” cried Mary, pulling him by the collar to attract attention; “I told you, Cecil has got five pounds.”

“Five nonsense, Mary. Emily, do say, is there nothing for Cecil?”

“Yes; I believe there is a legacy of five

thousand pounds, or so ; but that is all. They have even taken away her diamonds, poor girl. I declare I never heard anything so shameful in my whole life. She was so good-natured, too, in lending them. I really believe,—yes, I am certain, Louisa had on the tiara and ear-rings at the very ball where she first met Lawson ; for you know, as I did not intend remaining at Cheltenham, I had none of my own ornaments with me.” Perhaps, if the truth were told, it was to that same tiara Louisa was indebted for her conquest ; for Robert Lawson, naturally enough, concluded that the possessor of such splendid jewels could hardly fail of being wealthy.

“ And then,” continued Lady Emily, “ Cecil says nothing could exceed the shameful manner in which these Johnsons behaved after her uncle’s death ; and, would you believe it, though she asked as a personal favour that he might be taken to Eldersleigh, they would not do it ; in fact, they would’nt go to the expense of a proper funeral where he was, and so he has been buried

in a country churchyard, just like a common pauper."

"And he deserved no better, cold-blooded villain!" said the Earl, beginning to pace the room with rapid, unequal steps. "And how—how," he asked, at length, "does she bear the disappointment?"

"She feels it very much, of course; everybody must; and she's dreadfully altered,—looks miserable,—quite a shadow; and no wonder, after all she's gone through. I shouldn't be surprised if she were to go into a consumption, and die. All the Huttons are so delicate, you know."

Lord St. Maur sighed deeply. "Emily," he said, "I'm sure I need not say to you, that we must endeavour to lighten as much as possible this heavy affliction; and nothing must be suffered to occur, by which, in the remotest degree, Cecil might be reminded of her misfortune."

"I will do all I can to comfort her, poor girl."

"Where is Cecil?"

“ She’s gone to lie down ; the journey has quite knocked her up, although they were two days making it.”

“ Papa, shall I go and fetch her ?”

“ No, no, Mary, don’t disturb her.”

Oh, but she’s only just gone ; she can’t be asleep yet.”

“ Rather,” said the Earl, “ tell your cousin Anna to shut the door of the music room ; that harp makes noise enough to waken the seven sleepers.”

“ Sad business this, my Lord,” observed Sir Thomas, as he joined the conclave. “ Scandalous proceeding ; but we can dispute the will, I think. The old rascal must have been out of his senses.”

“ Certainly, the trial shall be made ; but if we can only plead insanity, I doubt the success. When I saw General Moubray, at Cheltenham, in March last, there was not the slightest evidence of madness about him, at least, none that would avail in a court of justice.”

“ Besides,” cried Lady Emily, “ think of the expense.”

“ Money,” replied St. Maur, “ would be the last consideration ; but I question whether we shall have sufficient grounds to establish the plea.”

“ Has Cecil nothing from her father ?” inquired the Baronet.

“ A mere trifle,—two thousand pounds, perhaps ; Mr. Moubray left, I believe, ten, but when the General adopted his niece, the greatest portion was, at his suggestion, sunk in an annuity on the widow ; probably to avoid the necessity of his making her a larger allowance.”

“ So, in fact, the old scoundrel has actually robbed his niece ; my blood absolutely boils to think of such injustice ; but she shall be righted, even if it costs me half my income.”

“ Lord St. Maur grasped the hand of the warm-hearted old man. “ Cecil, you know, is my relation, or, at least, my ward ; and ——”

“ Yes, yes, I’m aware of that ; but she’s no favourite of yours.”

An expression of pain passed over Lord St. Maur’s fine features at this remark, and he replied, in an agitated tone,—“ Do me, at least, the justice to believe, that, if it be possible to regain her inheritance, no exertion shall be wanting on my part.”

“ And you really don’t think we shall be able to prove insanity ?”

“ I fear the chances are against us ; but, at any rate, until the matter is decided, it will be better that nothing should be said to Cecil on the subject. So, Emily, pray be cautious.”

“ Oh, St. Maur, you really need not be afraid, I have always been famous for keeping a secret.”

“ Umph,” said Sir Thomas, “ it was rather an awkward mistake you made about Lord Piercefield.”

“ Ah,” said Lady Emily, “ it was, indeed,

most unfortunate ; I couldn't help thinking of it when I heard poor Cecil's story.

“ Well, well, Emily, take care you are wiser this time.”

Although rather anticipating the course of events, it may not be amiss to mention here that Lord St. Maur's doubts were well founded, and the attempt to prove mental aberration was, in consequence, speedily relinquished ; not, however, before Lady Emily had fully established her character for discretion, by disclosing to several persons the intention. Her brother was naturally much annoyed, and even the good-tempered Sir Thomas could not refrain from exclaiming, with something like an oath, “ Lady Emily really was enough to make a saint swear.” But as the individuals thus favoured had sufficient caution not to inform Miss Moubray, no great mischief followed.

Cecil's reception at Selwood, so different from that which she had expected, failed not of being deeply felt by one long a stranger to the voice of

sympathy; but, however she might appreciate the friendliness of Lady Emily's condolence, or Sir Thomas's fatherly embrace and frank assurance that she was too pretty a girl to want a fortune, it was from Lord St. Maur she derived the greatest comfort and support under her heavy trial. At their first meeting he made but a slight allusion to General Moubray's cruel injustice, then placing Mary's hand in hers, in a voice scarcely audible from emotion, entreated her to remember "that Mary's relations were her relations, and Mary's home her home."

Nor was this a mere burst of transitory feeling; from that hour his manner towards her became gentle, even to tenderness; he watched over her with the most anxious solicitude, and was unwearied in offering all those minute attentions which, unmarked, perhaps, save by their immediate object, find their way so surely to a woman's heart. It was no longer the imperious, suspicious guardian, or even the half-offended, half admiring companion, but the affectionate

devoted brother; and Cecil, remembering her former petulance with regret and shame, lost no occasion of expressing her grateful sense of kindness so undeserved, so unexpected.

And where were Lady Emily's second marriage fears all this while? Directed into another channel; for Lord Newrystown's protracted ailments had now assumed a fatal aspect; and though, as the physician said, his life might be prolonged a few months, it was more than probable his sufferings would terminate in a less period of time; and very bitterly, now, did Lady Emily regret her short-sighted policy respecting Eleanor, for, with all her folly, she had still shrewdness enough to know, that having cultivated an intimacy with Lady Newrystown during her husband's lifetime, it would be impossible to decline her society at a season when her near relationship gave her a claim upon her cousin's sympathy. Lady Emily had, in fact, outwitted herself, and she had ample reason to

lament the very foolish game she had been playing.

“How very languid you appear to day, my dear Cecil,” said Lord St. Maur, as he carefully placed her on the same bench they had occupied on a former occasion, with such different feelings; “you make no way at all; I’ve been thinking that sea air might strengthen you, and if it were not for these tiresome visiters we could make the trial at once; but really, after all, I see no reason why they can’t be put off; everything should yield to health. I will speak to Emily about it immediately.”

“Oh, no, you must not, indeed; it would distress me very much, I assure you; besides,” added Cecil, with a faint smile, “I have entirely lost my taste for watering places.”

“Then let us make a tour; you know nothing of England; the lakes, Wales, or even the Isle of Wight, are worth seeing, and if we set off without delay we should still have time. Mary

must go, I suppose, but if we left Anna with her sister, there would be room for me in the landau. Nay, I will hear no objections, for I am sure you would be amused."

Cecil did think that such a tour, with such a companion, promised much enjoyment; nevertheless, being satisfied that Lady Emily's annoyance would be great if her expected guests were put off, she replied, "I should, undoubtedly, be highly gratified, and I feel much indebted to you for proposing so delightful a plan, and were it practicable without disappointing Lady Emily, I know nothing I should enjoy so much; but indeed, I think it better to postpone it."

"But we have no time to lose, Cecil."

"Well, then, it must stand over for another season; you know you are not to get rid of me next April."

"I hope not, dearest Cecil."

"Besides, where could I see anything half so beautiful as the prospect now before us,

or breathe a purer, sweeter atmosphere than this?"

"You admire Selwood?"

"How can you think so meanly of my taste as to ask that question?"

"And you could be happy here?" he inquired, timidly.

"Surely; I were otherwise very ungrateful."

"But still, still, I am afraid your thoughts must often turn to Eldersleigh?"

"I cannot deny I do think of Eldersleigh, more than is desirable, perhaps, or wise; for, you know, it is not easy to throw off an impression that has existed from infancy. It is not so much that I regret my loss of fortune, for *that* has been more than counterbalanced by the very great kindness I have experienced, especially from you." As she pronounced these words Cecil raised her eyes, and cast upon her guardian a glance of affectionate gratitude that pierced his inmost heart.

"Oh, Cecil," he replied, "do not speak thus;

do not, I conjure you ; I'm sure the little I can do to soften your hard fate deserves no mention."

"Yes, yes it does ; and you must not refuse me the gratification of saying how much I feel and value it. But to return to my poor Eldersleigh : it is, I dare say, very foolish, but I sometimes think I should not have felt the loss so much, had I been supplanted by any other than Mrs. Johnson. Oh, Lord St. Maur, you cannot think how much it tries me ; to remember that my patrimony has fallen into such hands ; had it been Lord Ashford, or Mr. Walter Moubray, who had obtained it, I could, I believe, have borne the disappointment better."

"Have you any suspicion of General Moubray's motives?"

"None in the world ; nor had I the slightest expectation of the change in the disposal of his property ; it came upon me like a thunder stroke."

"It must have been a fearful blow."

“Is it not strange, that a man who had so much family pride as my poor uncle should have left the estate to a person who has not a drop of Moubray blood in her veins !”

“Do you think, dear Cecil, that General Moubray’s mind had suffered from his residence abroad ? Did you ever observe anything like insanity about him ?”

“I cannot say I did ; he was certainly sadly changed in his feelings towards me, and I have often wondered why he should have conceived a dislike to one whom he had formerly treated with so much kindness ; still, there was nothing like aberration of intellect ; and, therefore, I must suppose he had been prejudiced against me ; but who could act thus cruelly ? I do not think I have an enemy ; I am sure I never injured any one, at least, not wilfully ; still, I think mischief must have been made.”

“If it were so, Cecil,” inquired the Earl, without raising his eyes from the ground, “could you forgive that person ?”

“ I suppose I ought ; for we are commanded to forgive, and even to love, our enemies ; but I fear I should find the task very difficult.”

“ Even if there were great contrition ?”

“ Oh, Lord St. Maur, would so heartless a being be likely to feel at all on the subject ? But, in truth, I question the possibility of such cruelty, and rather incline to your idea, that my poor uncle’s mind was weakened.”

Cecil received no answer to her last remark ; and observing that her companion’s head was averted, thought she had dwelt long enough on a subject purely personal, and turned the conversation.

CHAPTER VI.

SIX rapid weeks are passed away, and Cecil Moubray is an altered creature ; her health and beauty are restored ; and despite her fallen fortunes, she is happy, absolutely happy. But not so Lord St. Maur ; there was evidently a weight upon his spirits ; some unknown care preying on his mind : some hidden grief destroyed his peace, and plunged him into a state of despondency. Cecil was deeply pained, and sought, by every means, to dissipate his gloom ; but every effort, far from accomplishing her wishes, seemed only to increase his melancholy ; indeed,

there were seasons when her presence appeared almost insupportable to him ; at first, she thought she had unintentionally offended him, but as his anxiety for her comfort invariably increased on these occasions, she became convinced, that whatever might be the cause of his mysterious sorrow, its origin was not with her. And what was it—what could it be,—which thus poisoned the happiness, and embittered the existence, of a man who, like St. Maur, possessed so large a share of earthly blessings ? This was a question Cecil often asked herself ; at length, the idea of an unrequited attachment suggested itself to her imagination ; but could *he* love unhappily ? Oh, how strange did that appear to Cecil ; yet it must be so ; how else account for his dejected state of mind ? and then pity, that most insidious feeling, gave him a twofold interest in her breast.

One morning, shortly after Cecil had made this notable discovery, Lord St. Maur, accost-

ing her with unusual gaiety, inquired if his services in London could be made useful?

“In London! Are you, then, going to town?”

“Even so,” he replied; “and as the object of my journey is one of very great importance, I trust you will give me your best wishes.”

“Most gladly; will you be long away?”

“Not longer than is absolutely necessary—a fortnight, perhaps; but it is impossible to say exactly, business is so uncertain; I shall, however, you may be sure, return the moment I can get away, and in the meantime, will you, dear Cecil, think me very presuming, if I ask you to look a little after Mary; I feel anxious at leaving her, as she has not been quite well lately. Will you oblige me so far?”

“Of course, of course; but do you really think Mary’s indisposition of any importance?”

“I trust not; but you know what a fool I am about her, and you will gratify me much by taking charge of her.”

“Surely I will.”

“Thank you a thousand times.”

“But you must give me full and particular instructions, or I shall not dare to venture on so precious a charge.”

“I hope there will be nothing to cause you anxiety; but if those head-aches return, pray send for Dr. L. without loss of time. And is there nothing I can do for you in town? No commission I can execute? Pray give me the pleasure of being useful; entrust me with your commands; tell me your wishes; they shall at any rate be zealously obeyed.”

“I am quite sure of it; but, in truth, I cannot at this moment think of a single want.”

“Not one, Cecil?”

“I remember, now, I do want something, a new bonnet, and you shall choose it for me.”

“Choose you a bonnet? Impossible! Nay, my dear girl, give me a commission I can execute. Send me to your jeweller, or bookseller, or music-shop, and I will do my best to please

you ; but indeed, indeed, I cannot choose a bonnet. You must be laughing at me ; you are not surely serious."

" Indeed, I am quite in earnest, but you are not ; thus proving yourself a true and faithful specimen of your false sex ; eager to profess, dilatory to perform."

" That is a very sweeping condemnation, Cecil ; is it, in truth and sober sadness, your *real* opinion ?"

" I am afraid it is ; you, I suppose, will differ from me ?"

" Are men more insincere than women ?"

" A thousand times ; we cannot be good hypocrites even if we would."

" And why ?"

" Because our feelings are so little under our control that they are perpetually betraying us ; has not our indiscretion passed into a proverb ?"

" But does your want of caution spring from frankness ? It is the first time I ever heard merit claimed on that score."

"Of course, you'll not agree with me; you have, I know, too low an opinion of women to allow us even this negative virtue."

"Not of *all* women, Cecil."

"Yes, yes, of *all*. You will not allow it now, because, perhaps, you think it's not quite civil; but I am assured that in your inmost heart you believe ——."

"Well, saucy girl, what do I believe in my inmost heart? Come, tell me."

"Why, that we are altogether an ill-conditioned race, loving mischief for its own sake, and doing it whenever we can; or, if we have not wit enough to make us troublesome, we are nothing better than living playthings, intended solely for your amusement, something to fill up your time and keep you in good temper when other recreation fails. Now, is not that your real opinion? I know it is; and to say the truth, I must allow it is not altogether without foundation."

"No, Cecil, it is *not* my opinion, or if it be,

it was not always. Man's nature leads him to love, to honour, to reverence your sex ; but if, stepping from the high pedestal on which we gladly place you, you throw aside the sceptre, ought you to complain if we no longer bow before you ? You are incredulous, I see ; but I will not give up my assertion ; and for proof, I appeal to the influence you exercise over us."

" Oh, as to that," replied Cecil, " I believe we owe our influence entirely to our perverseness. Man never willingly abates one inch of his prerogative, but we tease and plague you so, that, from weariness, you are obliged to yield."

" Still I must maintain, that if your characters are not more highly estimated by us, the fault is yours not ours ; believe me, it remains with you to change the censurer into the admirer, the master to the slave."

" In words, perhaps."

" No, not in words—in deeds."

" And my commission ?"—she said, archly.

“ Shall be executed ; to prove, that if we do sometimes amuse ourselves with your sex, you, when you choose it, can make fools of us. But will you promise to wear what I select ? ”

“ Undoubtedly I will ; unless, indeed, you make a perfect fright of me by way of revenge for my philippic ; and, by the way, I think you look very much inclined to do something of the kind.”

“ No, Cecil, I never attempt *impossibilities*.”

Lord St. Maur was gone ; and Cecil, delighted with the mark of confidence he had given, by leaving Mary in her charge, and not less, perhaps, by his last complimentary reply, (though, in fact, it hardly deserved to be considered in that light, as she had almost called it forth,) was about to commence her usual morning occupations, when she received an invitation from Lady Emily to accompany her to Firgrove. Nothing but an exceedingly pleasant companion can render a drive in a close carriage (and the weather precluded any other

kind of conveyance) palatable to a person of Miss Moubray's age, and this, as our readers are probably aware, Lady Emily was not ; but, good breeding and good feeling alike forbidding a refusal, Cecil prepared to obey the summons. The avowed object of the visit was to inquire how Mrs. Henrietta bore the news of Lord Newrystown's death, the account of which had reached Selwood the previous evening. Perhaps, however, we shall not be very far from the truth, in saying, that curiosity respecting the probable circumstances and future plans of the widow had some share in this display of Lady Emily's solicitude for her aged kinswoman.

The irksome tediousness of the drive exceeded Cecil's expectations ; for her companion, whose dread of Eleanor's influence over the Earl had now become intolerable, endeavoured to relieve her misery by pouring into our heroine's ears all her fears and anxieties ; she was certain the marriage would now take place ;

it was on that account Lord St. Maur had left Selwood so unexpectedly ; it was his excessive attachment to Lady Newrystown which had occasioned all his late gloom and melancholy.

Nothing could be more distasteful to Cecil ; but she did not give entire credit to Lady Emily's forebodings, and tried to persuade her that the evil was not quite inevitable. Still there were grounds, solid ones, too, for apprehension ; and when the near approach to Firgrove brought to her recollection the dinner party there, especially the " Robin Gray" part of the entertainment, she was compelled to acknowledge the justice of the surmise. Mrs. Henrietta being too unwell to leave her dressing-room, Lady Emily proceeded thither, while Cecil remained below, and as she sat in the fireless parlour, a volume of the Spectator in her hand (for Mrs. Beauclerc's scantily filled bookcase contained no modern publication), she made some highly sensible remarks on the cheerless existence of aged celibacy.

She was interrupted by William Beauclerc, who had brought down the account of Lord Newrystown's death. This was the first time they had met since the reverse of fortune, and as formerly he had shewn much predilection for her society, it seemed only natural there would appear, at least, a trifling measure of sympathy on his part ; but scarcely was his manner respectful ; he accosted her abruptly, barely replied to her inquiries for Mrs. Beauclerc and his sister ; then, seating himself at the other end of the room, made some addition to his fishing tackle, putting a few insignificant questions from time to time, the answers to which he scarcely seemed to heed, and at length, having done what was necessary to his rod and line, he left the room, humming a tune. In fact, Miss Moubray, being no longer a matrimonial prize, Mr. William Beauclerc was extremely desirous of annihilating the hopes his former attentions might have called forth : but he gave himself unnecessary trouble ; for as he had never been a

favourite, she had not for an instant contemplated the idea of becoming Mrs. William Beauclerc. She was, however, nettled by his disrespectful conduct; and her mind not unnaturally reverting to Lord St. Maur's very different behaviour, she drew a comparison between the cousins as flattering to one as it was unfavourable to the other; and for the remainder of the visit, Cecil no longer meditated on the petty miseries to which old maids are subject, but on an individual, whose image had engrossed, of late, a far greater share of her thoughts than she perhaps imagined.

“Cecil Moubray,—beware! beware! You tread on dangerous ground. Retrace your wandering steps, or you may mourn your rashness; for women's hearts are brittle things, and men sometimes break them.”

But Cecil will not listen. She sees no danger, why should she fear? why put a check on musings so delightful? It is not love,—it is *gratitude*, only *gratitude*, she feels towards her

guardian ; and it is her interest in Mary alone which renders the idea of his marrying Lady Newrystown so exceedingly unwelcome.

Lady Emily descended from Mrs. Henrietta's dressing-room with lengthened visage, for, in truth, the conference with her venerable relative had proved unsatisfactory to the last degree. Lord Newrystown, she informed Cecil, as they drove homewards, had made a most extraordinary will ; by which the widow received no addition to her jointure, which was far from being liberal. During the minority of the eldest son, the family place was to be let ; and a sum, only just sufficient, was allotted for the education and maintenance of the children ; altogether, it was a very unpleasant business, and Lady Emily quaked for the legacies she had formerly reckoned upon ; for as Eleanor was Mrs. Henrietta's favourite niece, there was reason to fear the bulk of the old lady's property would be left to her. " And then," she continued, " it really is quite shocking to hear a

person like Mrs. Henrietta say,—it would not at all astonish her if the marriage should take place.”

“Surely, Lady Emily, you did not speak to Mrs. Beauclerc on that subject?”

“Indeed I did; for I thought, as she has always been remarkable for propriety and decorum, she would endeavour to shew Eleanor how very wrong it would be to marry my brother. I said, too, that you agreed with me.”

Cecil felt greatly annoyed, and wished to protest against this unwarrantable use of her name; but Lady Emily gave her no opportunity.

“I must say, Mrs. Henrietta surprised me considerably, by speaking as she did of Lady Newrystown; but I suppose she is getting into her dotage, poor old lady; and those Beauclercs are such an artful set, I never could endure them. I dare say it will end by their getting every shilling of her fortune.

“Has not Mrs. Beauclerc any relations as near as they are?”

“None ; old William Beauclerc was her only brother ; he was a good deal younger than herself, and married, as you are aware, his first cousin, my aunt ; and when Lady Jane ran away with Lord Manby, Mrs. Henrietta took charge of her two little girls, now Lady Newrystown and Mrs. Falkland (who I believe you never saw), and very kind it was of her ; indeed, if she had not, I don’t know what could have become of them ; for Mr. Beauclerc took his wife’s misconduct so much to heart, that he went out of his mind and cut his throat, without making any provision for his daughters ; so it was thought a very fine thing when Lord Newrystown proposed for Eleanor, and my father gave her a present of two thousand pounds on her marriage ; I believe, to say the truth, it was more to get her out of Horace’s way than anything else. However, the money

was paid, and it really will be very hard if she should get him after all."

"Is Lady Newrystown likely to be in this neighbourhood soon?"

"I am sorry to say, she is coming to Firgrove directly, and as Mrs. Henrietta does not like children, she asked me to have the boys at Selwood; and, you know, I couldn't refuse, although it will be the greatest plague in the world, to have those clumsy, rude creatures, breaking and destroying everything they can lay their hands upon."

"But they must be very young?"

"Quite old enough to frighten one out of one's senses. I hate boys; so greedy, too; never happy but when they are eating; and then always having something the matter with them. Henry had the hooping-cough the last time they were at Selwood, and now, I dare say, they will have the measles, and we shall be obliged to nurse them; I declare it makes me quite unhappy to think of all my poor brother will

bring upon himself by marrying that deceitful person."

"And you really think the marriage will take place?"

"I do, indeed ; for some time past I have suspected there has been an engagement. I am very much afraid she has inveigled St. Maur into a promise of marriage, in case of Lord Newrystown's death."

"Oh, Lady Emily, do you think Lord St. Maur, with his high principle, would act in such a manner?"

"My dear Cecii, there's no saying what a man may not be led to do by an artful woman ; you know it was all owing to Lady Newrystown that Mr. Coxe Fellowes behaved so ill to poor Louisa."

"Still there is something so very revolting in the idea of contracting an engagement with a woman during her husband's lifetime."

"That's all very true ; but when men are in love they are very apt to forget everything but

their own wishes. The Newrystowns were in town last spring, and Horace was a great deal more at their house than I approved of, I assure you; I am afraid he is fairly entangled; it makes me miserable to think of his being so foolish as to marry again, after having had such a wife too."

Cecil could hardly forbear smiling. "And then," pursued Lady Emily, in a dolorous tone, "there is Sir Thomas spending I don't know what upon his house; it's really terrible, how careless people are about their money."

Cecil reminded Lady Emily, that replacing a stack of chimneys, and repairing a roof damaged by the late hurricane, were unavoidable acts of expenditure.

"Yes," replied her ladyship, "I believe you are right; the chimneys and roof must be mended, certainly; but didn't Sir Thomas say he thought of papering the drawing-room while the workmen were on the premises? At any

rate, he said he didn't expect to get away from Selwood under two months."

The week that followed Lord St. Maur's departure was signalized by two events, whose effects upon Miss Moubray were exceedingly diverse. The first was, the re-appearance of Mrs. Mason, who had, immediately on returning to Selwood, obtained permission to visit her family; the second, the arrival of a box of millinery from London. Mason, having thought proper to extend her leave of absence from one to two months, met with a somewhat ungracious reception from her lady, who, like other young mistresses, was tenacious of her authority; she was also an ill-tempered, vulgar-minded person, in no way adapted to her present situation, and would long ago have been dismissed but for the circumstance of her having attended Mrs. Moubray during the greater part of her trying illness: and as she suspected the nature of the tenure by which she held her

situation, she took little pains to render herself agreeable.

There were, likewise, constant feuds between her and Lady Mary; for she was not fond of children, and by no means relished the increase of trouble occasioned by Mary's predilection for examining the contents of Cecil's wardrobe, or pulling about the various articles, useful or ornamental, which lay upon the toilette table; several of Cecil's dresses, too, bore traces of her little cousin's pen and ink performances, consequently were less valuable; and Mrs. Mason being one of those prudent persons who look principally to the main chance, did not easily forgive the delinquent.

Now, Lady Mary was a good child, and gentle withal; but she was an Earl's daughter, and, as such, would not patiently submit to be scolded by a waiting woman, whom Mademoiselle Justine, and Mrs. Brown, and even her own old nurse, looked down upon. This state of things led to incessant bickerings, so that, altogether,

Cecil was heartily sorry to see her return. But this vexation was speedily lost in the delight occasioned by the contents of the millinery box; she found therein, a bonnet, of course, the most becoming she had ever worn; and something better than a bonnet—to wit, a flat paper parcel, folded and sealed with the greatest neatness, containing a square lace veil, of the most costly description; and on a slip of paper, some lines, in which allusion was playfully made to the last conversation she had held with Lord St. Maur. There was no signature, but the handwriting was familiar, and the verses, she thought, original.

The bonnet was worn on the first opportunity; the veil was shewn to no one, and, instead of being deposited where such articles of dress usually are, was, with the accompanying billet, carefully returned to its envelope, and then consigned to the drawer of her writing desk, where were treasured some precious relics,—her mother's wedding ring, a gold pencil-case, the first offering of Mr. Moubray's affection to his

destined bride, some of her little brother's hair, and a few other trifles of the same description. Was it not ominous, that Cecil placed her highly-valued gift amid these sad memorials of the dead ?

Miss Moubray's spirits, which had rather flagged since the visit to Firgrove, now rose to a high pitch, for she felt convinced that Lord St. Maur would not have taken so much pains to gratify her, if, as Lady Emily asserted, his journey to London had been on Eleanor's account ; she was, in fact, hardly in earnest when she proposed so ridiculous a commission, and little expected he would give it a second thought.

CHAPTER VII.

ABOUT a fortnight after the Earl's departure, Sir Thomas received, as his portion of the post delivery, a letter from the absent nobleman : he opened it impatiently, and, having rapidly glanced at its contents, jumped up, and with a very debonnaire air made a sort of pirouette on one leg, which, as the worthy Baronet's figure was not of the zephyr description, had a somewhat ludicrous effect ; then began walking round the table, much in the fashion of a horse in a mill, still reading his despatch, and ejaculating at in-

tervals,—“court of law,—will,—General Moubray,—thought so,—capital idea,—Mrs. Johnson, confound her!—transportation,—Eldersleigh,—knew it, knew it.”

“My dear Sir Thomas,” interposed Lady Emily, but without effect; Sir Thomas did not heed her, and continued,—“Diamonds; hem, pity that; no matter though, get others,—twenty thousand pounds; too much, too much; doesn’t know the value of money; shouldn’t have given more than ten,—bad business, ended well though; mustn’t complain.”

“My dear Sir Thomas,” again interrupted Lady Emily, “what has happened? Pray, don’t walk in that manner, you’ll make yourself quite giddy, and perhaps bring on a fit of apoplexy. Sit down, I entreat you; what has St. Maur been writing about?”

“Read it yourself,” said Sir Thomas, placing the paper before her; or rather read it out loud, for I can hardly understand it yet. Capital news, capital news, indeed.”

The contents of the letter, which Lady Emily read aloud, were much to the following effect :

The project of setting aside General Moubray's will, on the grounds of insanity, had, as we informed our readers, been abandoned ; but a slight inaccuracy in the drawing up of that infamous document was discovered, and though of so trifling a nature that even the most sanguine of Lord St. Maur's legal advisers acknowledged his doubt of a successful issue to the contest, the Earl declared his intention of litigating to the utmost ; and the Johnsons, unwilling to enter the lists with so formidable an opponent, consented to a compromise, by which it was agreed that Mrs. Johnson should relinquish all claim to Eldersleigh, and whatever might remain of the personal property, on condition of her receiving the sum of twenty thousand pounds, permission to retain the jewels, and an exemption from giving any account of the money they had already spent. Lord St. Maur stated, that as soon as the business was finally arranged he should go

down to Eldersleigh, and from thence return to Selwood as speedily as possible. He offered his affectionate regards to Cecil, and entreated her to consider the reserve he had maintained on this point towards her, not as arising from want of confidence, but solely from the apprehension of disturbing the admirable resignation and noble fortitude with which she had borne her reverse of fortune, by raising hopes which might not, perhaps, be realized. Lady Newrystown was manner mentioned once only, and in so careless a that even Lady Emily's mind was relieved.

Great was the sensation produced by this communication on the different members of the family now at Selwood; Anna smiled, Lady Emily repeated, again and again, her assurances of pleasure, Sir Thomas chuckled, and rubbed his hands, Lady Mary clapped hers, without exactly knowing why. Cecil alone was mute; deep feeling is seldom eloquent in words—and she was happy, intensely happy; her inheritance was recovered, her position in society

restored ; and it was to *him* she owed it all. He had praised her, too ; and dear to woman's heart is praise from those she loves.

She is happy ! Yes, by the light, springy step, by the beaming eye, by the glowing cheek, the sunny smile which parts her dewy lips ; while wrapt in a dreamy silence, she knows not that she has smiled—Cecil is happy ! And is it joy at her recovered rights ? Does she exult in her brightened prospects ? Ah, no ; it is a deeper, purer feeling, free from all sordid vanity or worldly pride ; something, perhaps, like that young happiness that bloomed awhile in Paradise, ere entered sin and poisoned all, and then came grief to blight, embitter, and destroy !

“ I wish,” said Sir Thomas, in the course of the afternoon, “ I had not thought of papering my drawing-room.”

“ Ah,” replied Lady Emily, “ I told you it was too late in the year.”

“ But the fellow ought to be getting on ; at any rate, I'll ride over to-morrow, and see what

they are doing ; and some of you ladies must come with me, for I shall want your advice ; no giving a ball without it."

" A ball ? a ball, Sir Thomas ? Surely you are not thinking of giving a ball ?"

" A ball at Westfield !" cried Anna, " oh, my dear uncle, how delightful !"

" But the expense, my dear Sir Thomas ; pray consider the expense. You have no idea what such things cost ; I assure you, you could not do it under three hundred pounds at least."

" Hang the expense," replied the Baronet, " I shouldn't care if it were twice as much ; this good news has made a young man of me again ; so a ball I will give, and open it, too, with the prettiest girl in England, at least, if she'll have me for a partner. Will you, Cecil ? And her health shall be drank at supper, in a good old fashioned bowl of punch."

Lady Emily was horror-struck. Sir Thomas dancing ; Sir Thomas drinking punch ; Sir Thomas would inevitably have a fit, and die !

“But,” said Anna, “supposing the room should not be done in time?”

“Ah,” replied the Baronet, “that is the rub ; these workmen are so confounded slow.”

“Why not give a ball here, mamma?”

“Yes, yes,” cried Lady Mary, “pray give it here.”

“I don’t know but that might be the best plan ; when my brother comes home we can speak to him about it.”

“No use waiting for that,” said Sir Thomas, “St. Maur mayn’t be at home for a month.”

“Oh, mamma, don’t wait for the Earl ; write and tell him, and let us send out the cards at once. He’s sure to be pleased, you know he is always so good-natured.”

Lady Emily did not feel so certain on that point ; but observing that Sir Thomas’s dance-mania did not abate, and, considering her brother’s displeasure (if, indeed, he should be displeased,) as a mere nothing when compared to the danger the Baronet would run from his pro-

jected festivities, she finally consented, and a day was fixed upon. In making this decision, the idea of shifting the expense from Sir Thomas to Lord St. Maur, carried doubtless some weight with her ladyship, who had yet another inducement, in the hope that these gaieties might furnish a decent pretext for postponing an invitation to Eleanor.

“Cecil, come here, my dear,” said Sir Thomas, one day, shortly after the above conversation, “I want to have a little chat with you, about this party to Thornborough. Did I hear you say last night you meant to break your engagement?”

Cecil acknowledged such an intention. Sir Thomas asked why? She did not wish to go from home; they were to stay some days at Thornborough, and she could not with comfort leave Mary for so long. Even on his account, (he had a very slight touch of the gout), she would rather remain at Selwood.

The Baronet was, of course, very much obliged

and flattered ; he was, nevertheless, sufficiently ungallant to assure her, that as he and Mary could take care of each other, she must not for their sakes disappoint Lady Thornborough. And at length, perceiving that Miss Moubray was disinclined to profit by his forbearance, he shifted his ground ; talked of the necessity of circumspection, and, pointing out, in forcible terms, the expediency of a young woman's avoiding even the breath of slander, assured Cecil the peculiarity of her position involved the necessity of even extra caution ; " for this," concluded he, " is not a world, in which beauty and wealth may be possessed without exciting envy."

Cecil yielded, though not without an inward smile at the vanity which induced a portly, elderly gentleman, like Sir Thomas, to imagine her remaining at home with him could possibly give rise to ill-natured remarks ; but she found no cause afterwards to regret her compliance, since to her very great pleasure, she discovered

among the many persons who were assembled at Thornborough to grace the marriage of the eldest daughter, her old friend and favourite, Wickham, who, being the intimate friend of the bridegroom, had accepted his invitation to the wedding, without in the least suspecting that Thornborough was within thirty miles of Selwood Castle.

This gentleman, of whom, reader, you have hitherto heard but little, yet who will not always play the same insignificant part, was, at this period of my narrative, about six-and-thirty years of age ; his manners were quiet and unassuming ; his appearance gentleman-like, but not striking ; his eyes good, and his features would have been handsome, had it not been for the small-pox ; still, he was far from plain, and being well-informed and intelligent, his conversation seldom failed to please ; altogether, Edward Wickham, although, perhaps, not formed to captivate a woman's imagination, or peril her happiness, or throw her into a decline

(for such things do happen, in books at least), was, nevertheless, well formed to promote domestic comfort. Cecil was always glad to see him ; he was an old friend ; and as his grounds and those of Eldersleigh lay contiguous, there were necessarily many topics of local interest common to both ; and had Sir Thomas seen how much of Miss Moubray's attention was engrossed by Mr. Wickham, during her visit at Thornborough, he might, perhaps, have deemed another lecture necessary. Lord St. Maur, assuredly, would have looked very grave had he been present.

Before leaving Thornborough, Lady Emily gave Mr. Wickham an invitation to Selwood, which, however, urgent business obliged him to decline. She then, to Cecil's infinite amusement (for he was no dancer), presented him with a ticket to the ball ; and, as a second refusal must have appeared ungracious, he promised, if possible, to be among the guests.

“ My dear Mary, what have you been doing ? ” said Cecil, to her little cousin, who joined the

party assembled before dinner, smelling like a perfumer's shop, and looking like an offended bullfinch.

“ Oh, Cecil, Mason's so cross ; I wish she'd go away again ; she's always scolding me, and I couldn't help it ; it was quite an accident, it was indeed.”

“ Well, but my love, what has happened ? What couldn't you help ?”

“ Why, breaking the smelling bottle ; you know you said I might have some bouquet whenever I liked, and I wanted to put a little on my frock, and the bottle fell down and broke, and it was all spilt ; and Mason said I did it on purpose, but indeed I didn't ; and she called me a nasty, mischievous little toad ; and pinched me, too, Cecil.”

“ Pinched you, Mary ? Did Mason dare to pinch you ?”

“ Yes she did ; she took hold of my arm to push me out of the room, and she pinched me here,” said Mary, exhibiting her arm, which

certainly bore marks of the waiting woman's ill temper.

"This will never do," exclaimed Cecil, indignantly ; "Mason must leave my service immediately, if she forgets herself in this manner."

"Oh, Cecil, send her away, pray do."

"Indeed, Mary, I have no wish to keep her," replied Cecil, while bathing the child's arm with Eau de Cologne.

"But shall she go, Cecil?"

"Yes, certainly ; I would not keep her on any account after such conduct as this."

"I'm so glad."

Dinner was announced, and Mary, disregarding the prudent remonstrances of the trustworthy old servant who took charge of her at those seasons when she could not be with the rest of the family, flew to inform Mrs. Mason of her intended dismissal.

"There," cried the eager child, "I've told Cecil, and you're to be sent off directly. I'm quite glad."

“ Indeed, Lady Mary.”

“ Yes, I asked Cecil to send you away, and she said she would.”

“ Perhaps there are two words to be said to that, though ; I can tell my story as well as you.”

“ Ah, but it wont be of any use ; Cecil doesn’t like you ; she said so this morning ; she said she wouldn’t have you at all if it hadn’t been for her mamma.”

“ Miss Moubray doesn’t like me, Lady Mary?”

“ No,” said the child, “ nobody likes you.”

“ Well, it’s no matter, whether I’m liked or not ; but, at any rate, you’ll be so good as to go out of this room, Lady Mary ; you’re not wanted here.”

“ Indeed I shan’t, Mason ; this is Cecil’s room, and she told me I might come in as often as I liked ; and it’s my papa’s house, too, and I wont be ordered about by a servant like you ; if my papa were at home he’d send you to prison for pinching me.”

“ I don’t care whose room it is, or whose

house it is either, Lady Mary; you've no business here, and you shan't stay,—so tramp." And Lady Mary would have suffered a second ejection but for the appearance of her nurse, who, having gained the scene of action, interposed between the belligerent powers, and put an end to the warfare, by carrying off her little mistress.

Very serious were the consequences of this fracas; Mason determined to retain her situation, and as she felt she could not do it by fair means, she chose another line of proceeding; and deep and lasting was the injury our heroine's peace of mind received from the result of a circumstance so trivial.

That evening the cross post brought a letter from Lord St. Maur in answer to Lady Emily's respecting the ball; it was written from Eldersleigh, where he had been detained longer than he expected, owing to the extreme confusion in which he found everything; but he hoped to reach home in the course of ten days. Cecil's first impression was one of delight, at the prospect

of his return ; the next moment a shadow of dissatisfaction crept over her mind, for she thought it singular there had been no direct communication between her and the Earl : the millinery had been acknowledged and admired in a letter from Mary to her father ; and as it never occurred to Cecil that Lord St. Maur's reserve sprung from his dread of rousing Lady Emily's suspicions, she feared there was more of cordiality on her part than on his. But for that sense of delicacy which forbids a female from making the first advances, she would gladly have written to him, but he, it seemed, although withheld by no such consideration, was satisfied with a simple message, and even, in addressing his sister, had mentioned her as " Miss Moubray."

What a strange riddle is a woman's heart ; she loves because she is beloved ; yet does her impulse almost always lead her to question the affection which has given birth to hers ; and then, perhaps, like Cecil Moubray, she takes alarm at the very circumstance that should

have given confidence; for, most assuredly, had Lord St. Maur regarded his ward with feelings of indifference, or of mere common-place esteem, he would not have manifested so much reserve and caution.

The night wears on, and all is hushed throughout the Castle, save in one chamber, and there sits Cecil Moubray, her hands clasped, her eyes, one moment fixed upon the ground, the next cast mournfully around her, her complexion varying from the deepest crimson to an ashy paleness, her bosom heaving tumultuously; and in the stillness of that midnight hour, the quick pulsations of her labouring heart are all but heard; and near her, Mason, eagerly watching her young mistress, and offering, from time to time, a kindly office, or consoling word. But, notwithstanding all her outward show of sympathy, there was a gleam of exultation in her small grey eye, which plainly told that Cecil's misery was her doing, and that she triumphed in her work. Suddenly Miss Moubray

rose, and taking from an *escritoire* two bank notes of some value, placed them in Mason's hand. "Mason," she said, "you have done a friendly office, although, to me, the consequences are so painful, and I am bound to thank you."

"I am sure, Ma'am," replied the attendant, eyeing the money with considerable pleasure, "I'm sure I never looked for no reward; I never thought of expecting any; so, if you please, Miss Moubray, I'd rather not take the money. I thought it my duty to speak, and when one's done one's duty, that's enough for an honest person."

Cecil waved her hand. "Keep it, Mason, keep it; and, if you would further oblige me, let nothing of this mortifying transaction be known. I believe you said that, beyond yourself and Lord St. Maur, the affair (at least, as far as my uncle is concerned,) is a profound secret; let it remain so, and you will not have reason to repent your caution."

"Certainly, ma'am; I've no wish to do any-

thing to make you uncomfortable; and as for spreading about *mischievous* stories, it's a thing I never could abide."

"Did you not say that Wilcox wished for the situation of butler at Eldersleigh?"

"Why, yes, ma'am; he did say he would have liked it out of regard to the family; but Lord S. was so very pressing, and *h*anxious to have him, that at last he said he supposed he must oblige his lordship."

"Well," replied Cecil, "if he should change his mind, the place is open to him."

"Thank you, ma'am; you're very good, I'm sure; and certainly it must be a great comfort to a young lady like you to have old, faithful, attached servants about you; and so I'll write to Wilcox, and tell him your wishes."

"And you are positive my uncle said I was privy to that—that proposal?" gasped Cecil, after a short pause.

"As certain, ma'am, as of my own existence," replied Mason, with that undaunted air which

persons of her description usually assume when they are uttering a downright falsehood.

Cecil sighed heavily. "I'm very sorry, Miss Moubray, to see you take it so to heart; I'm sure, I almost wish I hadn't told you; but really I couldn't bear to think of your being made the talk of the whole county, and to have it in everybody's mouth, that you was courting of a man who had behaved so shamefully to you, and been the cause of all your troubles."

Cecil was silent: she now understood the motive of Sir Thomas's advice.

"And certainly," continued the odious waiting woman, "people must be very ill-natured, as I was a-saying to Mrs. Brown, when she told me how everybody said you wouldn't be so fond of Lady Mary, if it wasn't for his lordship. Well Mrs. Brown, said I, people's very ill-natured, if a young lady can't take notice of her own *nat'ral* relation without, in a measure, losing her good name."

"I hope, at least, the mischief has not gone so far as that?" asked Cecil, quickly.

"Indeed, Miss Moubray, when once people's tongues is set going, it's hard to say where it will end; besides, ma'am, you know Lord St. Maur is almost to be counted a married man; and 'tis so degrading to a young lady to have it said she wants to marry a man who's engaged to another."

"But it is false," cried Cecil, passionately.

"Well, ma'am," replied Mason (not understanding her mistress's true meaning), I hope you'll find it so, that's all I can say; but it's the general opinion that his lordship *is* engaged to Lady Newrystown, wicked, deceitful man that he is, pretending such a regard for you, and playing you false all the time. I never heard of anything so *himmoral* in all my life; but I assure you, Miss Moubray, I'm afraid you'll find you're mistaken in thinking he's not engaged, for, so long ago as the day we were over at Firgrove, I remember hearing it said

that he had promised her marriage when the old lord died ; and that he has not married again, because he has been keeping himself for her."

"Mason," said Miss Moubray, "why did you not tell me what took place at Cheltenham immediately on our return?"

"Because, ma'am, I didn't see no occasion then. But when I comed back, and heard everybody cry out how fond you was getting of his lordship, why, you know, Miss Moubray, I thought that, as your dear mamma was not alive to advise you how to *hact*, I thought it was time for me to speak."

"Still, Mason, I wish you had told me sooner; for if you had, this unfortunate report could never have been spread, and I should have been spared the mortification I now endure."

"La, ma'am, but how could I possibly know that you'd fall so much in love with his lordship all in a minute. I'm sure, I never was so surprised in my whole life : why, you know, Miss Moubray, formerly you didn't use to like each other."

“And my uncle actually told Lord St. Maur I wanted to marry him?”

“Yes, ma’am, he did ; I heard it quite plain, for as you told me to be very attentive to General Moubray that day when you were at church, I thought it best to sit in the next room, and so I heard every word his lordship said, and the General too ; and a sad hearing it was, to think of a young lady like you, Miss Moubray, who has always held her head so high, being offered to a gentleman who said he wouldn’t have you.”

“Oh, I shall never survive this !” cried Cecil, burying her crimsoned features in her hands.

“Miss Moubray,” said Mason, after a brief silence, “it’s growing very late—past one o’clock ; hadn’t you better be thinking of getting into bed.”

“Yes, yes, I know it is late ; but I am not tired,—I am not sleepy,—I cannot go to bed yet.” Mason yawned. “But I need not keep you up. I want nothing, so good night ; leave me.” Mason hesitated, but Miss Moubray repeated

her order ; so, after casting a look of malicious triumph upon her miserable victim, the unprincipled menial left the room. “ Now, Lady Mary,” thought she, “ I wonder who’s got the better—you or I ; no turning off for me, I fancy.” Then looking at the notes,—“ Forty pounds ! This is pretty well, at once. Some people talk of high wages ; but, for a profitable *situation*, give me a mistress who has a secret to be kept. Yes, this is a very fair beginning ; but we shan’t stop here. When I’m housekeeper at Eldersleigh (for such I will be), and Wilcox, butler, ’twill be a hard matter if we don’t both make a couple of hundreds every year ; and that, with the legacy, and what I’ve saved, will soon be plenty to start a new house at — ; and then Mademoiselle Justine, and Mrs. Browne, and all the rest of your saucy, *imperunt* crew, which of you, I should like to know, will turn up your nose at the mistress of the King’s Arms hotel ? Ha, ha, the tables will be turned then, I think ; and I shall look down on you, you

spiteful minxes ! But I wonder what this fancy is for sitting up all night. I hope she wont be going out of her mind. She looked very wild-like, I thought, at times ; or if she should have a brain-fever, and tell everything, what should I do then ? I think I'd better go back and see what she's doing. Only kept me out of regard to her old, dead mother, indeed ! She'll keep me for something else now, I fancy ; and pay me well, too, or my name's not Mason."

Shortly after, having deposited her ill-acquired gains in a place of safety, she returned to her mistress's apartment, and, cautiously opening the door, perceived Miss Moubray writing, and so intent on her employment, that she was not aware of Mason's presence. " So," thought the villanous woman, as she crept back to her dormitory, " I must look to that letter ; for if she should take it into her head to write to him, there would be an explanation, and then good bye to me.

With the grey dawn of a winter's morning,

Mason again entered the room, and found Miss Moubray lying half dressed on the bed in a state of profound sleep, or rather, perhaps, stupor, while a taper still burnt upon the writing table, where lay an unfinished letter, which Mason forthwith began reading; but it was *not* to Lord St. Maur.

“Carry, dearest Carry, advise me—tell me how to act, for I am miserable—distracted—beside myself with shame. In mentioning to you the sad change in my uncle’s will, I believe I said I had no clue whatever to the cause; but now I know it,—yes, I know it all. I know, too, why my guardian, formerly so supercilious and overbearing, has, since my misfortunes, appeared all kindness and compassion. Alas! well might he pity me; for it was *his* doing—some letter, some representation of his—I hardly understand what—prejudiced my poor uncle, and I was disinherited? And never did I once suspect *him*, although I knew how much he hated me. Oh, how blind, how foolish have I been; but, Carry,

this is not the worst. When we were at Cheltenham, my uncle, prompted by reasons, which I cannot fathom, proposed me—offered me,—yes, Carry, *offered me* in marriage to this haughty man ! said that I wished it ;—and he rejected me ! And then—and then, when I returned and found him so much altered, I only sought to prove my gratitude,—to please,—to——I cannot go on ! My dearest friend, pity me, for I am overwhelmed with shame. He is away just now, but soon will return. And I must meet him ; but how?—how encounter one who spurned, rejected me ; and whom I courted—fawned upon ; for in that light alone must my conduct, latterly, appear. Oh, must he not despise me ? Could I but once have guessed the truth ;—but I did not ; for, after that unfortunate visit, my uncle became kinder than before. And I am told that people talk of my attachment,—yes, they say—I love !”

Thus far had Cecil written, when, overcome by the prostration of mind which sometimes

follows great nervous excitement, she had been obliged to desist, and the incoherent letter was never finished, for, in a cooler moment, she resolved to conceal the mortifying transaction, even from her most intimate friend. It might, perhaps, have been more fortunate had she formed a different resolution; for in an emergency so trying, the opinion and advice of a really sensible woman, such as Mrs. Hartfield, might have led to a line of conduct different from that which Cecil, listening only to her startled delicacy and wounded pride, adopted.

For two days a feverish cold confined her to her chamber, and afforded time for recovering some degree of composure; on the third, urged by Mason, who was particularly anxious to avoid provoking curiosity, she re-appeared in the drawing-room; and as, in endeavouring to conceal her real feelings, she affected an unusual degree of gaiety—and the very effort heightened her complexion, and gave increased animation to her general appearance—no one suspected

she was ill—no one guessed she was unhappy. She mentioned her intention of repairing to Eldersleigh, when her own mistress; and, for a day or two, slackened in noticing her little cousin (to whom Mason, elated by her late triumph, was easily induced to offer an apology); but Mary was not easily repulsed, and Cecil found her task so painful, that she was glad when the arrival of the little Newrystowns, by attracting Mary's attention, saved her the necessity of acting in a manner equally unjust to the little girl and distressing to her own affectionate heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE was much truth in Mason's revelation. General Moubray left England with feelings far from favourable to his niece ; she had not answered the object for which, mainly, he had adopted and educated her ; she had, directly or indirectly, entailed on him an infinity of trouble, and the reluctance manifested by Lord St. Maur to undertake the charge of her, mortified and irritated the proud old man, who henceforth regarded Cecil as little better than an incumbrance, or in the light of a bad speculation, on which he had spent much money

without receiving an adequate return. This impression was soon discovered, and carefully fostered, by the nefarious Mrs. Johnson, who lost no opportunity of increasing her own influence, and undermining that of every other being ; and her endeavours were only too successful, for, on the receipt of Lord St. Maur's unfortunate despatch, General Moubray, in a paroxysm of ungovernable rage, swore with a fearful oath, that neither his lands nor wealth should go to one who had proved herself thus undeserving. And then the second will was made ; and General Moubray returned to England, full of bitterness towards his unconscious niece.

But Lord St. Maur's visit to Cheltenham produced a considerable change in the old gentleman's mind ; it was some time, indeed, before he could be induced to relinquish the supposition he had so long entertained, and which, in fact, had originated with himself. But the Earl's repeated assertions of Cecil's entire innocence at length succeeded ; and when, in his

anxiety to obviate any mischief he might have caused, and heartily commiserating the discomforts of her situation, he not only defended her from the imputation of extravagance, but even palliated the enormity of her offence in refusing Lord Piercefield, by assuring the General that Miss Moubray's beauty and expectations entitled her to a more splendid alliance, there was a faint revival of the old man's feelings towards his niece ; and, his pride being gratified by the admiration bestowed on Cecil by a man of Lord St. Maur's high rank and consideration in society, he was willing once more to own that she was "a good girl." Nor was he singular in coming to this conclusion ; for I have often remarked, that girls are considered and appreciated in their families, exactly in proportion to the wealth and station of their respective admirers.

Thus far the conference had answered Lord St. Maur's intentions ; but it produced a result he certainly little anticipated. From that period,

visions of ambition once more began to present themselves to General Moubray's imagination. Cecil, he thought, might yet form an advantageous marriage, and be thus the means, in a great measure, by which he might regain his former position in the world ; then, remarking that she was as guarded in speaking of the Earl as he had been lavish in praising her, it suddenly occurred to the old gentleman that they were mutually attached ; and catching eagerly at the idea, which was not, in fact, unnatural, he determined, if possible, to bring about the match. But there was a barrier,—one that might prove insurmountable, and he himself had raised it. During the interview, Lord St. Maur had laid great stress on Cecil's expectations ; and this, not from any sordid feeling, but in the hope that General Moubray's ambition on her behalf might lead him to adopt a style of living more befitting his station and more conducive to her comfort.

But the motive was of course unsuspected by

the General ; he only knew the Earl had mentioned expectations, which were no longer in existence. Now, as far as concerned Mrs. Johnson, it would not have cost this selfish being the shadow of a pang to revoke the last disposal of his property, if by thus doing he could in any manner have advanced his own interests ;—but the oath, the fearful oath ! It is a singular, but certain fact, that irreligious persons are sometimes slavishly superstitious ; as though truth, angry at being thus rejected, drew with her reason in her banishment ; and in accordance with this principle, General Moubray, who barely acknowledged the existence of a God ;—General Moubray, who, in his path through life, had trodden under foot all that men honour and esteem ;—General Moubray, who, listening to his angry pride alone, had not scrupled to commit an act of gross injustice, now feared to break his impious, most unrighteous oath.

But at length he hit upon a plan, which

might, he thought, remove all difficulties ; present increase of income could be no material object to Lord St. Maur, and if Cecil were passed over, and the property settled on the second son, the oath, both in spirit and in letter, would still be kept. Hitherto, there was nothing, perhaps, very extraordinary in General Moubray's notion, but the manner in which he carried his scheme into execution, certainly partook of his natural eccentricity of mind ; since, instead of throwing the Earl and Cecil together, and suffering the matter to take its natural course, he resolved on imparting the whole to Lord St. Maur. Accordingly, a note desiring an interview was written, and despatched to him. Cecil was sent to church to ensure her absence ; and Lord St. Maur having obeyed the summons, General Moubray proceeded to unfold his plan.

Lord St. Maur was thunderstruck on learning the alteration of the will ; the possibility of so harsh and iniquitous a proceeding had never once occurred to him. General Moubray, it is

true, had threatened to disinherit his niece, in case of her marrying Armstrong; but to condemn her thus unheard, unwarned, appeared an act of cruelty, which curdled his very blood. And now, looking upon her as deeply injured, the interest which, in spite of all her waywardness, Cecil had awakened in his breast, became painfully increased; for if it be man's nature to shelter and befriend an unprotected woman, how much more is he so impelled, when, as in the present instance, he feels he has been instrumental in her misfortune; and nothing could exceed his perplexity and distress, as General Moubray continued to point out the scheme by which restitution in some measure might be made to Cecil, but which Lord St. Maur well knew was utterly impracticable. He had heard from her own lips that she would rather die than marry him; and her whole conduct, during the time she was at Selwood, the ungracious manner in which she had met his overtures for a better understanding between

them, even the cold reception she had given him on the preceding day, proved this to be the settled tenour of her mind—not a mere burst of irritated feeling. She had, too, declared, again and again, that rather than give her hand to one she did not love, she would lose all ; how then suppose that she would marry him ? He saw that never could the plan be brought to bear ; he was aware, also, that if the refusal came from her, it would increase a thousand-fold her uncle's anger. He had no choice ; one path, and one only path, there was, and that he followed. So far, therefore, Mason was correct ; but her assertion respecting the allusion to Cecil was utterly false ; for General Moubray, fallen as he was, had still too much knowledge of human nature, perhaps even too much delicacy, to hazard such a communication.

Lord St. Maur *did* then refuse Miss Moubray, alleging as a reason his determination of not marrying again ; and after endeavouring to impress on General Moubray's mind the injus-

tice of adhering to his resolution, concluded his visit. And Cecil came home from church, wondering at the whole business ; and Mason issued forth from her hiding place, little suspecting, that in gratifying her impertinent curiosity, she had, in fact, acquired a large store of “ useful knowledge.”

On reviewing the matter, although he wished it had been otherwise, Lord St. Maur saw no cause to question the wisdom of the part he had acted ; nor indeed, perhaps, any great reason to fear the result, as far as regarded Cecil’s interests ; for General Moubray had listened to his remonstrances with silent attention, almost amounting to apparent conviction. He imagined, therefore, that the old gentleman would hardly persevere in an error of which he was convinced ; or, at any rate, among the many who must be attracted by Cecil’s beauty, some one might be found with whom the same arrangement could be made, without doing violence to her feelings. And as, in announcing her uncle’s death, she made no mention of an

alteration in the will, he naturally enough concluded that all was as it ought to be, and as, perhaps, it would have been, but for Mrs. Johnson's arrival at Cheltenham.

But soon, very soon, did that artful woman regain the influence she had in some degree lost during her separation ; and her fears being raised, by observing how much General Moubray dwelt on the iniquitous proceeding in which she had acted so prominent a part, she allowed no opportunity to escape, neglected no effort, to drive the subject from his mind ; and as he entertained a superstitious fear of death, and gladly turned from all which might remind him that he was but dust, she succeeded in her abominable attempt ; and Cecil, in every way a wreck, returned to Selwood.

Callous, indeed, must have been that heart, which could refuse its sympathy to such a being under a trial so severe ; but if even strangers pitied, and acquaintances condoled, what must have been *his* remorse and grief, who

felt that all the mischief might be traced to him, and that an act of kindness to his little girl had formed the groundwork of his misrepresentation. Lord St. Maur was truly wretched ; and every day and every hour increased his misery and self-reproach ; for, while witnessing her gentleness, her readiness to acknowledge the most trifling expression of good will, he could not but allow that, had he from the first treated his ward with mildness and forbearance, very different, indeed, might now have been their relative position. And if he had loved her in all her untamed pride and wayward petulance, was she not now a thousand times more dear, when, with a chastened spirit, and a disposition softened by affliction, it seemed as though her very trials were forgotten in her anxiety to please, and wish to prove her gratitude. And then she leant upon him,—looked up to him,—clung to him ;—and *he* had wrought her misery ! There were, indeed, moments, when Lord St. Maur was almost frantic ; for deep

and strong were the feelings of his nature, and he loved, as man seldom does love, yet dared not speak of his affection ;—no ; though the overwhelming passion struggled for utterance, and his soul's wishes hovered on his lips, he dared not give them breath ; for with all the timidity which invariably accompanies sincere attachment, and misled by the frankness of her manner, he was wholly unsuspecting of Cecil's real feelings ; and remembering her former antipathy, he dreaded lest a premature disclosure of his sentiments should deprive him of the poor solace of endeavouring to mitigate her misfortunes ; of the faint hope, that at some distant day, won by his long and persevering love, she might be his.

The successful termination, however, of the negotiation with the Johnsons, relieved his spirits from a heavy load ; and while, in the solitude of Eldersleigh, he walked from room to room, seeking, in the portraits of her ancestors, traces of resemblance to her loved features,

his hopes acquired buoyancy, his wishes strength; and many a vision of happiness, too bright, perhaps, for truth, rose upon his mind; and he counted the days, almost the hours, to the rapturous moment when he should again behold her; for now no bitterness would mingle in their intercourse; and he could meet her deep blue eye, so often, and so softly, raised to his;—could hang on the sweet accents of her liquid voice, could watch her playful, most endearing smile, without the agonizing recollection that he had saddened that bewitching smile, had dimmed those eyes where only joy should dwell, had given sorrow's language to that tuneful voice.

The business at Eldersleigh was at length concluded; and, full of joyful eagerness, of ardent hope, of deep, devoted love, Lord St. Maur reached home;—and Cecil · Moubray met him with marked, almost disdainful coldness.

It is not easy to describe the effect of such a

reception ; at first, he thought it might be feminine caprice, or pique ; or perhaps, even elation of spirit on her accession of fortune ; but when he found his slightest attempt at familiarity of manner resented as impertinence, that almost her first action, on recovering her estate, had been to intimate her intention of leaving Selwood ; that she avoided him, even more sedulously than during the former uncomfortable period of their acquaintance ; he could not but believe there were other reasons for a change thus painful and unexpected. And gradually the conviction forced itself upon his mind, that, swayed by mercenary motives, Cecil in her poverty had seen and encouraged an affection which, now that establishment was no longer an object, she wished to check. Long did he combat a supposition so degrading to the object of his admiration, but in vain ; the melancholy surmise hourly gathered strength ; he felt, he knew it must be true.

“ But oh, Cecil,” he mentally exclaimed,

while the blanched cheek, and quivering lip, and gushing tear, told his soul's agony, "Oh, Cecil, was mine the heart, were mine the feelings, you should thus have trifled with?"

Say, who can paint the anguish of that hour, be it in love, or friendship, or in the dear domestic ties, when a rude hand withdraws the veil wove by our deep affection, and shews us the reality of what we loved; some blighting whirlwind withers the gay flowers, or pales the gorgeous tints with which our fancy, our fond, foolish fancy, bedecked the idol we prized too highly; and our crushed feelings, startled and betrayed, recoil upon the bankrupt heart which sent them forth; and then, we bitterly bewail, not our own shivered hopes alone, but the sad wreck of what did once appear so bright and good. And thus St. Maur mourned Cecil Moubray. It was not her mere beauty he admired; for, though fair the casket, fairer yet the gem within; and since her sorrows, she had seemed to him something so pure, and holy, so like a

being of another world, there had been almost worship in his love. But that is past,—the spell is broken,—and the dream dissolved ; her talents and her beauty still remain ; but where, oh, where, the soul, the high-born mind, which gave a charm, a lustre, to the whole ? She is a heartless, mercenary being, and he must tear her image from his heart, must throw behind him every thought of what he once believed her. Then, with his altered sentiments, his manner changed—and Cecil felt the change ; felt it, as those alone who love can feel.

But, fearful of betraying herself, she became more distant still, and made a greater effort to conceal her grief under an appearance of excessive gaiety. Cecil acted foolishly ; she ought not to have heeded the representation of such a person as Mason ; she ought not to have changed her manner, or, at any rate, the alteration should have been gradual. But she was young, proud, inexperienced, and wholly unadvised ; she was, besides, in love ; and, as the Ettrick

Shepherd very truly says, "Women so circumstanced are always in extremes; either all coyness, pride, and jealousy; or tenderness and complacency."

Shortly after Lord St. Maur's return, the morning service at the parish church was performed by a stranger. Mr. Scott had entered on his holy office from motives really conscientious; and well and faithfully had he discharged the trust. Of noble birth, and richly endowed with every requisite to please, to him the world could not have been devoid of charms; but all had been forsaken, all passed by, and he had proved himself a holy, self-denying minister, the tenour of whose life was in accordance with the truths he taught. But now, the task is nearly done, the labour over; for death has set his signet on that smooth, young brow; and all who saw him, knew they looked upon a dying man; and that conviction added weight to his discourse; for who could question the sincerity of a being thus standing on the very confines of eternity?

The little church was crowded to excess ; and among the numbers attracted by curiosity, or, perhaps, by better feelings, there were few on whom his solemn eloquence was lost. Even Lady Emily (who generally dozed during the sermon) felt her attention roused ; less, however, by the discourse, than by the preacher. “ I wonder,” thought she, struck by the tokens of a speedy dissolution, so evident in his whole frame,—“ I should like to know, whether that young man has a mother ; I am sure, if he were my son, I should soon put an end to his preaching, and send him to the south of France, for at least one winter. A very good sermon, indeed ; and I hope the common people understand it.” And Anna wondered if he had a wife, or sister, to tend and cherish him, and perhaps thought she should have found the task a pleasant one ; but then, he was so good, so very good, would he like her ? Cecil, too, listened with deep interest, for her heart responded to his voice, and her experience echoed every solemn truth he taught.

Although in the depth of winter, the heat, owing to the crowded state of the church, was excessive; and Mary, wearied by listening to what she could not understand, after manifesting various symptoms of impatience, gave a deep sigh, and placed her little warm, ungloved hand, in Cecil's; who turned towards her with a look of inquiry, so affectionate, that all her guardian's tenderness revived, and he determined upon seeking an explanation of conduct, apparently so much at variance with her general character and her undeviating kindness to Mary. "She looks unhappy, too," thought he; "perhaps Emily has been putting some nonsense into her head; at any rate, I will speak to her, and ask the reason of the change; she will walk between the services, and I can join her; she can but refuse me, and then, at all events, I shall know the worst—worst? Can anything be worse than this wretched state of suspense and uncertainty?" And having come to this resolution, he leant back in his seat, and with his eyes half closed,

ran over in his mind all he should say to Cecil, and all he *hoped* Cecil would say to him. But Mary was not the only person whom the heat and lengthened service overcame; for at the most interesting period of the Earl's imaginary tête-à-tête, his attention was attracted by certain agitated sounds from the body of the church, and drawing back the curtain, he perceived Mrs. Mason leading forth in strong hysterics, and wearing the identical head-dress he had selected with so much care for her mistress; and which Cecil, in the first moment of mortification, had bestowed on that execrable woman, not, however, with any intention of its being worn.

The service ended. Cecil walked alone, and Lord St. Maur rode over to Firgrove, where he dined, and did not return until the other members of the family had left the drawing-room.

CHAPTER IX.

“ELEANOR,” said William Beauclerc, on the following morning, “do you ever indulge in castle-building? Yes, of course you do, and your mental visions, doubtless, often take the form (not of a dagger, as Macbeth’s did, but) of a countess’ coronet.”

“William, I cannot understand your motive in asking that question?”

“Well, then, to speak plainly; do you not wish, hope, and believe, you will one day be the Countess St. Maur?”

“I should have imagined, that my present

dress might have saved you the trouble of making such an inquiry !”

“ It does, in one sense ; inasmuch as it proclaims your release from your late shackles. And as, by Lord Newrystown’s death, one great difficulty is removed, it gives assurance that your hopes are more likely to be realized ; therefore, perhaps, my question *was unnecessary.*”

“ That, however, was not my meaning, in alluding to my present situation,” said Eleanor, raising her handkerchief to her eyes.

“ And what was your meaning ?”

“ Simply, that I should consider such contemplations highly reprehensible in my present melancholy position——”

“ And totally at variance with the grief you entertain for a man whose death you have been almost praying for since the moment when, having promised to love, honour, and obey, your *jointure* was secure.”

“ William, you are unkind.”

“ Quite the contrary ; I am actuated by

brotherly love alone ; and you, Eleanor, will do well to listen to me ; for if, as I believe, you are cherishing the expectation of marrying Lord St. Maur, it may not be unwise to ascertain how far your wishes are likely to be accomplished ; so come, throw aside this affectation of sorrow, which can deceive no one, and give me your attention ; for you know very well, that as, unhappily, I owe some thousands to our noble cousin, it is quite as much my interest as yours that you should become his wife ; and I can tell you something it is as well that you should know ; so, hear me."

" Pray, then, speak low," she replied, glancing towards the inner room, where sat Mrs. Henrietta Beauclerc, most laudably employed on an interminable piece of carpet work.

William drew nearer to his sister ; and, without speaking, looked at her, with a mixed expression of malicious pleasure and affected concern. For, although he had spoken truth in alleging their interest to be mutual, he had

an unpleasant piece of news to communicate; and he was one of those persons (Rochefoucault says the feeling is universal) who rejoice in the misfortunes of their dearest friends.

“ Well,” she said, at length, endeavouring to conceal the alarm his manner and words had occasioned, “ I am all attention ; pray speak ; what have you got to tell ? Nay, if you persevere in being silent, I shall think —— nothing.”

“ Perhaps you will come to that conclusion under any circumstances,” he replied, with infinite carelessness.

Eleanor resumed her work ; she did not wish him to perceive how deeply interested she really was, and therefore forebore repeating the inquiry.

“ So, Eleanor, you will not listen to me ?”

“ I believe you are only mystifying” (William whistled, and caressed his dog) ; “ I am convinced you have nothing to disclose ; at least, nothing of the slightest importance.”

“Judge for yourself then.”

“How can I, unless I know the grounds on which to form my judgment?”

“You wish to marry Lord St. Maur?”

“You choose to think so, William.”

“Yes,” he replied, “I believe you entertain that hope; and, as a piece of brotherly advice, I strongly recommend you to ——”

“To what?” asked Eleanor, eagerly. “For heaven’s sake, speak plainly; you make me quite nervous with all this affectation of mystery.”

He looked at her again for half a minute, and then, in a low, distinct whisper, added, “to give up the idea.”

Eleanor’s countenance brightened. “Is that all you have to tell me, William?”

“Is it not a great deal?”

“Or nothing.”

“I hope you will find it so.”

“But why,” inquired Lady Newrystown—
“why do you thus advise me?”

“Because you will be unsuccessful ; and I am always sorry when I see talent misapplied ; and, in this instance, yours will not succeed. I make a point of sympathizing with disappointed—genius ; *love*, I should have said, but love has no part in the business, or you would yourself have discovered what I now disclose.”

“But you have made no disclosure ; you have merely given advice.”

“Indeed ! Did I not mention that Miss Moubray is attached to Lord St. Maur ?”

“No, William, you did not, indeed ; and I must observe, I hardly think it worth while to make so great a mystery of what in itself must be wholly without foundation. And the next time you wish to amuse yourself at the expense of my credulity, let me advise you to light on something which I *can* believe.”

“Well, sister mine,—they say, forewarned is forearmed. But if you will not profit by my counsel, the blame must rest with you.”

“Indeed, William, I cannot see how any one

can be blamed for not believing what is notoriously untrue."

"Many thanks for your politeness."

"Now, don't be angry, William; you know the whole matter is a joke."

"What whole matter? Your future intentions on St. Maur?"

"No, no; our conversation, and your attempt to make me believe that Cecil Moubray is in love with Horace."

"I assure you, Eleanor, I had no intention of joking; on the contrary, I was never more serious. Cecil Moubray, I repeat, *is* in love; and if you choose to disbelieve me, as I said before, you must take the consequences of your incredulity."

"Even supposing she were, as you say, attached to my cousin, why should that interfere with me?" (William was silent.) "Certainly, Miss Moubray is considered handsome, and she has a large fortune; but as St. Maur, so far from admiring, is hardly even civil to

her, I really cannot conceive how she and I can clash." (Still no answer ; William loved tormenting.) " I really cannot understand," proceeded Eleanor, " why you should lay such a stress on Miss Moubray's feelings. If Horace were needy, she might have some chance of winning him, provided she wished it ; a point, on which, to say the truth, I am still very sceptical. But, as you are well aware, the estates have long been clear, and are even, I believe, rapidly improving ; therefore, I own I cannot see the slightest danger of his risking his happiness by marrying against his inclination."

" Are you *quite* certain that it would run counter to his inclination to marry Cecil Moubray ?"

" Assuredly I am."

" And why ?"

" Because his dislike, or rather antipathy, is a well-known fact ; I have even heard you express your surprise at it ; although, I believe, Cecil was never much to your taste, however

her wealth might have been convenient. And, by the way, has she refused you, William, and softened that refusal by avowing her attachment to her guardian ?”

“No, Eleanor, I have not asked her ; nor do I mean to do it.”

“How, then, came you in possession of this important secret ?”

“In the first instance, by accident, as secrets often are discovered ; in the second, by a judicious exercise of my faculties.”

“Pray explain.”

“I thought you considered the matter too trifling to merit attention.”

“Excepting as a matter of curiosity ; I can look upon it in no other light.”

“Well, then, I will gratify you ; Miss Moubray’s countenance betrayed her. I have seen her change colour more than once at the mention of his name.”

“Is that the only ground of your assertion, William ?”

“No, not the only ground. My curiosity was raised by her varying complexion ; and as I always approve of straightforward measures, I went to the fountain head, and taxed her with it.”

“Oh, William, how could you be so cruel ?” cried Lady Newrystown, a woman’s feelings for one minute rising above her artifice and selfish vanity.

“I really can’t see that I was guilty of any great barbarity in asking merely a simple question. But, I believe, Cecil is a protégée of yours ; you took, I remember, a prodigious fancy to her, and paid her all sorts of civilities. She is, it must be confessed, a very ungrateful person ; and I am therefore more inclined to pity you, Eleanor ; for, unpleasant as it ever is to be thwarted in our darling schemes, it is of course a thousand times worse to be supplanted by a *friend*. Upon my life, Eleanor, I pity you.”

“Pray reserve your compassion for another occasion ; for I assure you, at present, I neither

wish for, nor deserve it. And you are quite in error in supposing I had any predilection for Miss Moubray ; since, if I have ever shown her any attention beyond common civility, it was on your account alone."

" On my account ?"

" On your account ; in consequence of your thinking her a good speculation. Have you forgotten your intention of being master of Eldersleigh ?"

" Had I any such intention ?"

" You said so."

" Well, perhaps you may be right ; Eldersleigh *is* worth having ; therefore, if Cecil Moubray had fallen in love with me, it's just possible I might have married her."

" I've no doubt you would have condescended so far. But do tell me—when you accused her of loving Lord St. Maur, what was her reply ? She surely did not acknowledge her attachment ?"

" No, she denied it, of course."

“Then, after all, your assertion concerning her carries little weight?”

“Merely that of *positive certainty*.”

“How?”

“Miss Moubray denied her attachment to Lord St. Maur; as every other girl similarly circumstanced would have done; and her denial received from me as much credit for sincerity as it deserved. But I have yet another reason for confidence in my suspicions.”

“Which is ——.”

“Simply, that whereas, previous to this conversation, Miss Moubray thought proper to treat me very much *de haut en bas*, she has since become all suavity and kindness; and I leave it to your judgment to determine what but the certainty that I possess her secret could have wrought the change; she knows she is in my power, and dares not offend me.”

“And you will keep the secret?”

“Most religiously; and so will you, Eleanor; for it is your interest to do so.”

“ I have no wish to give unnecessary pain, and therefore shall not betray Miss Moubray. But I cannot understand why *my* interest can be affected, one way or the other, by her attachment to Horace.”

“ Then you are not the sensible woman I once supposed you to be.”

“ Will you explain your reasons for this change of opinion ?”

“ I thought I had. Cecil Moubray is in love with Lord St. Maur, and he with her, consequently, let him but once suspect the truth, and you may bid farewell to all your high-flown expectations.”

“ If, as you say, Lord St. Maur *does* love Cecil, why does he not propose ?”

“ Because he thinks he has no chance.”

“ Impossible.”

“ Quite certain.”

“ What leads you to think he is attached to her ?”

“ I suspected, long ago, that he admired her ;

and since we were at Cheltenham together, I have been certain of it."

"Did you go to the fountain head there, William?"

"No, Eleanor; a man with common sense who has the misfortune of owing money to another, is careful of putting a question which might be deemed impertinent. I therefore merely made use of my eyes."

"And they told you ——"

"What I have just said."

"But how? What happened? I wish you would speak more openly."

"My dear Eleanor," cried Mrs. Henrietta, at this moment, "pray come here, I cannot hear a word you are saying."

"I will, ma'am, I will;" cried Eleanor, affecting to gather her working implements together; and looking imploringly at William, "Quick, quick," she said, "finish what you have to say."

"In the first place," he replied, "I never

could quite make out what took him to Cheltenham at all ; in the next, he shewed, I thought, a very undue anxiety respecting a mare, which had formerly belonged to Miss Moubray. Then, not content with paying a two hours visit at the house, on which occasion he declined my agreeable society, he accepted an invitation to dine with General Moubray, although he had previously engaged Tierney to dine with us."

"And did he go?"

"He would, I believe, but I declined playing the host ; and out of consideration to you, made one or two happy allusions to the temptation, &c. And forthwith, a note of excuse was despatched to the old General. I wish you could have seen how sheepish he looked when I talked of the magnet which had drawn him to Cheltenham."

"But," said Eleanor, after a momentary pause, "if all this be true, why is there any difficulty ? Why are they not engaged?"

“Because, as I have told you, there is a coolness on her side, and he has not courage enough to break the ice. Your proud characters are very often shy.”

“And from what has that coolness arisen?”

“Upon my life, I can’t say. I’ve lived too long in this world to think of accounting for a woman’s caprices. *What* is the case, I have told you ; *why* it is so is of little importance. But, I again repeat, your whole and sole chance of becoming Lady St. Maur depends on his being kept in ignorance of Miss Moubray’s sentiments.”

Secure of her cousin’s affection, Eleanor had entertained no immediate intention of going to Selwood ; for Mrs. Beauclerc, although far from entering into Lady Emily’s views respecting the marriage, laid great stress upon the expediency of circumspection under her niece’s peculiar circumstances. But William’s communication had alarmed her ; and, although willing to trace it to his well-known love of teasing, she thought

it would be but prudent to form her own judgment; and resolved, in consequence, on repairing forthwith to Selwood, under the pretext of nursing her eldest boy, whose slight cold was easily magnified into a most alarming attack of influenza.

Mrs. Henrietta was a good deal vexed and surprised when informed of the intention; she fidgetted about, took off her spectacles, put them on again, took two or three pinches of snuff, expressed her incredulity as to Eleanor's presence being necessary; "did not think there was much the matter with Newrystown; it was nothing, she was certain, but a cold in the head, which would pass off in a day or two; reminded Eleanor, that for the next fortnight the Castle would be full of company; hoped, at any rate, she would return on Wednesday, as on the following night the ball was to take place."

Now this was rather an awkward circumstance; for Lady Newrystown, anxious, if possible, to benefit exclusively by her aunt's dispos-

able property, had spoken of this ball in terms of indignation ; for she affected to consider such a scene of gaiety a slight to her late husband's memory, which his family were called upon to resent. And Mrs. Beauclerc, being very tenacious of forms, agreed in thinking that Lady Emily had shewn a great want of proper feeling on the occasion ; still, as she felt there was a necessity for her going, all her aunt's objections and annoyance obtained little consideration. After a short discussion, therefore, maternal anxiety carried the day ; and Lady Emily learnt, to her infinite dissatisfaction, that her dangerous cousin proposed taking upon herself the anxious task of nursing her "dear Newrystown," who was immediately confined to his room, and put upon a water-gruel regimen.

A less experienced person than Eleanor would not, perhaps, have discovered anything to bear out William's assertions ; nor indeed might she, had not her suspicions been in a measure awakened. For Lord St. Maur's formal politeness and Miss Moubray's cold reserve were certainly

and Miss Moubray's cold reserve, were certainly not very evidential of mutual regard; still, Eleanor observed Cecil change colour more than once when his name was accidentally mentioned; there was also a degree of embarrassment in her manner while in his presence, which assuredly did not spring from indifference, while he, although seldom addressing his ward, and apparently quite willing to devote himself to Eleanor, was absent, and *distract*; his answers were not always to the purpose, and his eyes frequently wandered towards that part of the room where Miss Moubray happened to be. Eleanor remarked all this, and resolved that Henry should have the influenza as soon as his brother recovered.

It has been said, that if a woman makes up her mind to marry any particular man, she is certain of carrying her point, provided, of course, she has sufficient opportunity. How far this is true, I do not pretend to determine; nor do I see how it could be ascertained; since it is

highly improbable that either the successful or disappointed in this laudable pursuit would choose to acknowledge having made the attempt. But if there ever were a woman likely to succeed, Lady Newrystown was that woman. She was, it is true, older than her rival, but she had gained in experience what she had lost in years; then, she had *such* eyes, such splendid eyes, and knew so well how to make use of them; and though a widow's dress is not the most becoming in the world, its sable hue made no ill contrast to the unrivalled whiteness of her matchless hands; and as there is no regulation respecting the length of that costume, Eleanor contrived that hers should not conceal a small and well-turned foot and ankle. Old impressions, too, were in her favour; for long ago she had convinced her cousin that her marriage with Lord Newrystown had been quite compulsory; and as her peculiar situation drew, as it were, a line of demarcation round her, she was thrown almost entirely upon the Earl, whose

near relationship entitled him to offer, with propriety, attentions, which she could not have received from others without infringing the rules of decorum ; and the same propinquity of blood enabled her, without apparent indelicacy, to ask his advice on every difficulty, bewailing, at the same time, in most pathetic language, the hardship of having, as guardians to her boys, two individuals who were not well disposed towards her, and consequently, whom she could not possibly regard with confidence.

Even the unbiassed state of Lady Newrystown's feelings, by leaving her unembarrassed, and at liberty to adapt her manœuvres to the occasion, was favourable ; for, as William very truly observed, affection had no part in her anxiety to win her cousin's heart. But there is still an obstacle, which Eleanor must surmount, or she will hardly gain her wishes. Mary must be won, or small her chance of being the Countess of St. Maur. Lady Newrystown knew it, and overwhelmed her little relative

with kindness and attentions ; but in vain. Presents were little valued by the petted, only daughter, of a wealthy nobleman ; and, in spite of all Eleanor's caresses, flattery, and coaxing, Mary remained unmoved. " For Lady Newrystown was not like her mamma, neither could she teach her half the pretty things that Cecil did, nor tell her such beautiful stories, nor play with her, nor do anything like Cecil." Mary loved Cecil with enthusiasm, and all but hated Eleanor ; and this, in fact, was Cecil's vantage ground, for, with all the anger Lord St. Maur naturally felt towards his ward, the moment Mary's image came across his mind, all his indignation vanished, and one look, one word, from Cecil, would have brought him to her feet. But that look, that word, was never given ; for, shocked beyond measure by Beauclerc's indelicate curiosity, and sharing the general belief in the Earl's attachment to his cousin, she sought only to conceal her affection under the guise of coldness and indifference ; thus she be-

came Eleanor's most powerful ally ; and as one lady was doing all she could to persuade Lord St. Maur she was in love with him, and the other took the greatest pains to prove *she* was not, it was not wonderful if, forsaking Cecil, he attached himself to her fascinating rival.

"My dear Cecil," cried Lady Emily, beckoning Miss Moubray into her dressing-room, as they retired to their respective apartments, the evening of the second day Eleanor had passed at Selwood ; "my dear Cecil, did you ever see anything to equal Lady Newrystown's conduct ? I declare, it shocks me more than I can express—such barefaced impropriety ; in a widow, too, whose husband is only just dead. Even Sir Thomas observes it, although, you know, in general, he never notices anything of the kind."

"Is Sir Thomas so very inobservant ?" inquired Miss Moubray.

"Oh, dear, yes ; he never sees anything of the sort, and even if one tells him, it's hardly possible to make him believe it. I

assure you, Cecil, he does not think Mr. Thornborough is in love with Anna, although he is so very attentive to her ; *I* expect him to offer immediately. Don't you think it probable he will make his proposal at the ball ? He has engaged her for the first quadrille."

"If Anna accepts Mr. Thornborough, all his friends will have reason to congratulate him," replied Cecil, who was rather of the Baronet's than Lady Emily's opinion respecting the probability of Mr. Thornborough's offer, and who really liked Anna.

"He will, indeed, be a fortunate man," rejoined Lady Emily ; "although Anna, it must be allowed, is not half so pretty as her sister. By the way, Cecil, don't you think Lou. is looking very ill ? I assure you, I am not at all easy about her.——Yes, I know there is a reason for it ; still, I'm not satisfied ; she does not appear in spirits ; and I'm afraid Lawson's not so liberal to her as he ought to be. Would you believe it ? I understand, he would hardly suffer her to buy a new dress for

Thursday ; and really, considering who Louisa is, and how much she brought him, I think he might allow her to dress as other people of her station do, especially as this is her first appearance in the county since her marriage. But it's always the way with people whose connexions are not good ; they think of nothing but saving money. But, to return to my brother and Lady Newrystown ; do you know, Cecil, I've half a mind to speak to him on the subject."

"Oh, Lady Emily, I hope not," cried Cecil, terrified lest her name should again be brought forward to give weight to Lady Emily's remonstrance.

"You would not advise it then ?"

"On no account ; for I am confident that any advice, or interference, would have quite a different effect from that you intended."

"Perhaps you are right ; men don't like being interfered with in any way, especially in things of that description ; they are so headstrong, you know, there's no making them listen to reason ;

when once they've taken a thing into their heads nothing in the world will turn them from it. I assure you, I found it very difficult to persuade my poor husband to do anything he did not happen to like himself; and so, I think I shall take your advice, and say nothing to St. Maur."

"Indeed, Lady Emily, I think it would be your most judicious plan."

"But is it not sad to think of my brother's throwing himself away in such a manner; for, you know, Eleanor has nothing in the world but her jointure, and that a very paltry one. I am sure, I never thought Horace would marry again at all; but as he seems determined to have a second wife, I can only say, I wish, my dear Cecil, he had chosen you instead."

"Oh, Lady Emily, Lord St. Maur, you know, never liked me!"

"That's very true, and I've often wondered at it. But there's no accounting for tastes; however, I won't keep you up any longer, you look dreadfully pale and tired, so good night," con-

cluded Lady Emily, kissing Cecil, who reached her own room, full of shame and mortification, as she considered how much her partiality for her guardian must have betrayed itself, and how prevalent must have been the reports to which Mason had alluded, since even the dense Sir Thomas thought it necessary to warn her on the subject.

Probably, had her feelings not misled her judgment, she might have remembered, that Lady Emily's opinions were not always to be relied upon, especially as, in this instance, maternal vanity might have been her prompter. The fact was, Sir Thomas, just as credulous as his neighbours, had derived his information from his old factotum of a servant, who, in his turn, had been enlightened by the butler, and he, by Mrs. Mason herself, who had first invented, and then spread the report.

CHAPTER X.

ON the morning of the day preceding that on which the ball was to take place, Lady Mary informed her father that Cecil wished to wear some of her ornaments. The Earl was at first incredulous, but as Mary persisted, after a few cautionary injunctions, he gave into her hands two jewel cases, whose contents, having formerly belonged to her mother, were considered as her exclusive property ; and soon, the larger casket was unlocked, and its glittering treasures eagerly displayed by the delighted child, who thought the whole world contained nothing half so precious or so rare.

But Cecil had not the slightest intention of bedecking herself in her cousin's finery; on the contrary, her wish to see the jewels had been expressed merely to soften her refusal to wear them; and Mary, wild with excitement at the prospect of the approaching ball, heard the assenting answer, without exactly understanding to which of her suggestions it applied.

"Look, Cecil, look; did you ever see such handsome jewels? And those are diamonds, real diamonds; they are, indeed; and my mamma used to wear them, and that's her picture, beautiful, isn't it?"

At this moment, Lord St. Maur placed on the table the key of the second jewel case, which, in her hurry, Mary had left behind.

"Now, tell me," continued the child, "which would you like to wear? You shall have any thing you choose."

"My dearest Mary," said Miss Moubray, kissing her, "I am much, very much obliged to you; but I cannot wear your ornaments."

Mary looked disappointed. "But, Cecil, you said you would."

"No, my love, you mistook me ; you asked, if you should shew them to me, and to that I agreed ; but not to wear them."

"Then tell me, Cecil, which you think the prettiest." Cecil took a rapid survey of the trinkets, and then fixed on a bracelet.

"Well," cried Lady Emily, who, with a true woman's love of finery, was feasting her eyes upon the brilliant baubles ; "Well, Horace, I am sure you ought to be highly gratified. What do you think Cecil admires most of all Mary's jewels ? The bracelet with your picture." And laughingly touching a spring in the clasp, she brought to Miss Moubray's view a miniature of Lord St. Maur.

"I should think Miss Moubray must have fixed upon the bracelet, without exactly knowing all that was hidden by that pretty turquoise clasp," remarked Eleanor, as Cecil thought, with very great good nature.

“Lady Newrystown’s observation is correct,” she replied ; “ I had not, indeed, the slightest suspicion that the clasp contained a picture, nor should I have recognised the likeness had I even seen the miniature.”

“ Civil, that,” thought the Earl, throwing himself into a chair, with his back to Cecil, and crossing one leg over the other.

“ It was very like when it was taken,” observed Lady Emily.

“ I can imagine it,” rejoined Cecil, slightly examining the picture, which Lady Emily held before her ; “ in that light it is very like Mary.”

“ Cecil, do you think me like papa?”

“ The upper part of your face certainly resembles Lord St. Maur.”

The Earl shifted his posture, and faced his ward. He remembered how much she had once admired Mary’s eyes and forehead.

“ But why,” said Mary, “ do you like that bracelet so much, Cecil ? I don’t think it half so pretty as this—or this—or this ; and then there

are no emeralds, nor diamonds, nothing but just those few turquoises?"

"But the form is exceedingly elegant ; and the workmanship so light and pretty. It is surely foreign?" Cecil was right ; the bracelet was foreign ; and it led to a conversation respecting the superiority of foreigners over English in articles of taste and dress,—a superiority which Lady Emily denied, but which Cecil, principally, perhaps, to prove her real motive for choosing the bracelet, as warmly asserted. Eleanor seconded her, until she was called away to meet Mr. Drenchum, and Lady Emily, who was exceedingly sceptical on the subject of Lord Newrystown's indisposition, thought proper to accompany her.

"I tell you what, young lady," said Sir Thomas, also preparing to leave the room,—“I tell you what, young lady, you mustn't be so fond of the continent. It will never do, you know, to have a French Count, or Italian Marquis, lording it at Eldersleigh.”

“ I assure you, Sir Thomas, there is very little danger of it.”

“ I don’t know that ; these foreign coxcombs are monstrous insinuating fellows, with their moustachios, and their bowings, and singing, and dancing, and compliments, and nonsense. Girls fall in love with them before they know what they are about ; remember Miss Maitland, with her fine fortune, who married an Hungarian Count not worth a sous. So take you care, Miss Cecil, and don’t do as she did.”

“ Indeed, Sir Thomas, I run no such risk ; far from marrying a foreigner, it is very unlikely *I* shall marry any one.” As Cecil spoke, she chanced to raise her eyes, and meeting those of Lord St. Maur, which were fixed on her with an expression of much earnestness, she turned quickly towards the trinkets.

“ But,” said Anna, who thought that if, according to her mamma’s prediction, Mr. Thornborough did ask her to marry him, she should

like to spend the honeymoon abroad ; “ don’t you really prefer the continent ? You always speak of it with so much regret.”

“ Perhaps I do,” replied Miss Moubray, “ for the happiest period of my life was spent abroad ; it was not, you know, until after I became an orphan that I returned to England.”

“ Well, but Cecil,” interrupted Mary, “ what will you wear ?”

“ My dear Mary, you know I have told you I cannot wear any of your ornaments.”

“ Why not, Cecil ?”

“ Because, my love, if I wore ornaments which were not mine I should be like the bird in the fable ; don’t you remember what we were reading the other day, about the jay in borrowed plumes ?”

“ But I will give them to you, Cecil, I will, indeed. I will give you whatever you like best.”

“ No, no, Mary, you must not think of such a

thing ; your papa would not be pleased," Cecil answered, in a low tone.

"Oh yes, he would, I'm sure he would. Papa, mayn't I give Cecil some of my ornaments?" cried Mary, crossing over to the other end of the room, where Lord St. Maur was searching among the books that covered a very littered table for the latest number of the *Edinburgh Review*.

"Certainly, my dear Mary ; the jewels are yours, and you may do as you please with them."

"There, Cecil, I told you I might. Now what will you have? These pearls, or these other things?" said Mary, offering a succession of valuable trinkets.

"No, no, my dearest child, I cannot deprive you of your ornaments, I cannot, indeed." Mary was vexed. "Well then, you shall give me this little ring ; and I will always keep it for your sake ; and to-morrow, I will wear

nothing but some China roses, which you shall gather for me."

"A nosegay, Cecil ; nothing but a nosegay ? Oh, but you must have something besides that ? These pearls ; look at these pearls, how beautiful they are ; and that's papa's hair in the locket. Wont you wear that?" and in an instant the pearls encircled Cecil's slender throat. "They look *so* nice ; you shall have them ; you shall, indeed." Miss Moubray still resisted, and in Mary's eagerness the string gave way, and the pearls were scattered on the floor. Mary's consternation was excessive. Like the generality of children, she was sometimes, necessarily, reprimanded for awkwardnesses and other trifling misdemeanors, and found it, therefore, difficult to determine upon what was, or what was not, positively wrong ; and forming her own estimate of the value of the pearls, she imagined their loss irreparable, and as great her offence in breaking the string.

“Oh, Cecil, what shall I do? The pearls will all be lost, I’m sure they will, and then papa will be displeased ; he told me to be so careful about them ; and so I was ; I only put them about your neck as gently as possible ; I wasn’t romping at all. I only wanted you to have the necklace, because you are always so kind to me ; and I thought you would like it. Do you think he will be angry with me?”

“No, Mary, I am certain he will not. Lord St. Maur is never displeased but when you have done something wrong ; and that is not the case now ; quite the reverse ; so don’t be frightened ; I’m sure he won’t be angry. We must look for the pearls ; I dare say we shall find them ; and even if they were lost, it will not matter ; your wish that another should share your ornaments with you is a proof of generous and good feeling, and that is better than all the pearls in the world ; and so your papa will think, I know.”

Cecil spoke in a whisper, for she did not wish

Lord St. Maur to hear her observation ; but, notwithstanding her caution, he caught the words, and coming hastily towards her, after giving Mary a re-assuring caress, laid his hand gently on Cecil's, and said,

“ You are right, Cecil, I *do* agree with you ; good feeling is better than all the jewels in the world ? ”

Miss Moubray was leaning forwards assisting Mary in recovering her truant treasures ; and when she raised her head, a bright glow suffused her features, and a pleased smile played round her lips ; but instantly remembering she had in some degree complimented her guardian, the smile vanished, the glow of pleasure disappeared, and her countenance assumed its usual cold expression. Lord St. Maur gave a half sigh and returned to the library, where, in about half an hour, he was joined by Mary, bearing the jewel cases ; Cecil had found and re-strung, but would not accept, the pearls ; the caskets were returned to their usual place ; and

then, seated on a low stool at her father's feet, Lady Mary, who knew everything about every body, commenced an account of various little misfortunes that had befallen some members of the household in reference to the ball. "Monsieur Leblanc," she informed him, "complained there were not half partridges enough ; and Mrs Brown was terribly afraid the jelly wouldn't clear. Nurse's new white poplin gown was much too tight, it wouldn't even meet behind ; her aunt Emily's blonde lace cap was all awry ; Cecil thought her dress very short ; and Anna's wasn't come at all,"—while Lord St. Maur, with the review in one hand, and the other resting on his daughter's curly head, paid about as much attention to one as to the other.

Mary's harangue was interrupted by Lady Newrystown's entrance ; she bore in her hand some very pretty and appropriate trinkets, which she had ordered from London, and now offered to her little relative, expressing a hope

that she would like and wear them on the ensuing night.

Mary did not actually refuse the gift, but it evidently gave her little pleasure, and she declined wearing the trinkets, giving as a reason, that "as Cecil did not mean to wear any ornaments, neither should she."

Eleanor was vexed ; and Lord St. Maur, a little ashamed of his daughter's want of courtesy, proposed a drive, that he might shew her some improvements which were carrying on at some little distance from the Castle. The offer was instantly accepted, and Lady Newrystown, having laid on as much rouge as she thought might pass for the effect of the air on her complexion, took her seat by her cousin's side. They did not return until dusk, and if he found no enjoyment in the drive, most assuredly the fault did not rest with his companion, whose efforts to amuse and interest him were unwearied ; but such exertions do not always prosper.

During the evening, also, although he was almost entirely engrossed by Eleanor, Cecil's star was in the ascendant, for even while listening to the fascinating widow, or, at her request, reading aloud some very beautiful lines she had remarked in the morning in a recently published volume of poems,—even while thus apparently devoted to his cousin, Lord St. Maur's thoughts and feelings strayed more than once towards that part of the room where Cecil, for the twentieth time, was endeavouring to introduce order into an unfortunate piece of embroidery undertaken by Mary, who often remained up longer than children of her age generally do. And when, at a later period of the evening, she sang an air of which he was particularly fond, the Earl could hardly restrain his impatience, and would infallibly have proceeded to the music-room had not Eleanor begged his assistance in winding a skein of silk. As a gentleman, he was unable to refuse; but in his heart, I be-

lieve, he earnestly wished Lady Newrystown and her netting silk at Firgrove.

But Cecil knew nothing of all this. She only saw that he appeared devoted to his cousin; and, in thinking over the events of the day, would gladly have recalled her unguarded speech respecting the probability of her remaining single, which she thought he would perhaps attribute to a feeling of disappointed affection. The next day arrived the Duke and Duchess of S——, and their two pretty daughters; Lord and Lady William B——; the Thornboroughs; Lord Piercefield, and a numerous selection of single men, who were to spend a few days at Selwood. Lord St. Maur's time and attention were necessarily engrossed by his guests; and Eleanor thought it expedient to confine herself to her room.

Evening came, and throughout the Castle all was busy preparation. There were, however, three persons, who looked forward with little pleasure

to the expected gaiety,—Lord St. Maur, who, like most men, disliked balls any where, but more particularly in his own house; Lady Newrystown, who, on account of her mourning, could not appear; and Cecil, who, independent of other considerations, in her lonely, orphan state, felt herself an object of interest to no one. What availed it that she was lovely, since she was not beloved. Where was the gratification of being the theme of almost universal praise, when there was no fond parent, no kind relative, no sympathizing friend, to mark and approve the admiration she had called forth. Her toilette was completed, the China roses duly placed, but still she lingered in her dressing-room; she had not spirits to join the gay party, who were now fast assembling.

“Cecil, dear Cecil,” cried Lady Mary, “how nice you look. Why don’t you come down stairs? A great many people are come already, and it all looks so beautiful, you can’t think. I have been dressed ever so long, and

they are going to begin dancing in a few minutes ; but I haven't got a partner for the first dance. You know, I was to have danced with Henry, but Lady Newrystown will not let him come down, although nurse says there is nothing the matter with either of them. Cecil, isn't it very ill-natured of Lady Newrystown ?”

“ My dearest Mary,” said Cecil, “ who dressed your hair ?”

“ Why, Cecil, Mr. Curler brought over a new front for Mrs. Brown to wear to-night, and I coaxed nurse to let him do my hair.”

“ My dear child, I never saw such a figure as he has made you.”

“ Yes, papa says it looks like a cauliflower, and he wanted my aunt Emily to do something to get the curls out ; but she said, it would do very well as it is.”

“ Let me see if I can improve it. Stand still, my love, stand still. There, that is better ; now you look like yourself again,” said Cecil, as by dint of brushing and combing she succeeded

in destroying Mr. Curler's elaborate performance.

They entered the room together ; but Mary's progress was arrested by one of a group of gentlemen. " Ah, Mary, is that you, my pretty little friend. Have you forgotten me ? Upon my word, I should not have known *you* ; you are so much grown, and prettier than ever."

Lady Mary smiled and blushed, as all ladies, young and old, do, when they are complimented ; then, taking her father's hand, whispered, that " Cecil had done her hair."

" Cecil spoils you," said he, looking exceedingly pleased—" Cecil spoils you ; tell her I say so, and ask her to be kind enough, if she dances, to keep one waltz for me. Yet no, Mary, stay where you are ; Miss Moubray is better engaged ; you will only annoy her. Stay where you are, I tell you." Lord St. Maur's whole voice and manner changed, as he uttered the concluding sentences ; for, standing near Lady Emily, he observed Cecil in close and

apparently very animated conversation with Mr. Wickham.

Very few balls answer the expectations they have raised, nor did the one in question. Lady Emily expected a proposal for her youngest daughter, and none was made. Louisa hoped, as a newly-married lady, to outshine and mortify the heiress ; but she was less noticed than she had been, even as Miss Warham, for she was not agreeable, and her husband too poor to entertain. Cecil anticipated a tiresome, insipid evening, and she spent a very pleasant one ; for, independent of the pleasure with which she always greeted Mr. Wickham, it was impossible not to feel gratified by the compliment he had paid her in coming so great a distance merely to pass a few hours in her society. But of all disappointments, poor Mary's was the greatest. With her vague ideas of the charms of a ball, she had expected I know not what enjoyment and delight ; instead of which, she was pushed about by the crowd, unable to manage the

figures of some of the quadrilles, teased by the young men, and finally eat so many ices and cakes, that she was sent off to bed with a violent sick headache; and on the following morning reported as being fairly on the invalid list.

“I think your friend, Miss Moubray, might have prevented this,” thought the Earl, as he listened to the account of his daughter’s misdeeds and misfortunes; “I really think, Miss Moubray, with all her excessive kindness, might have contrived to look after you a little. But she was so taken up with that pale-faced friend of hers, that she could think of nothing else last night; she is the veriest flirt in England.” And he darted an angry look towards the side of the bed, where Cecil, quite unconscious of her late offence, was standing, having just persuaded Mary to swallow one of those agreeable potions which are usually inflicted on these melancholy occasions.

“This must be Lady Newrystown’s doing;

she is jealous of my influence over Mary. But she need not fear me," thought Cecil, as, putting down the cup, she gently left the room.

"Where are you going, Cecil?" cried the child, as soon as she had recovered the effects of a spoonful of raspberry jam. "Where are you going? Don't go away, pray don't." But Mary's expostulation was unheeded, and, in spite of two or three messages from her little friend, Cecil declined returning; by which means, she only teased the child, and convinced Lord St. Maur (who little suspected that he had driven her from Mary's bedside) that she avoided his daughter's room, merely because there was a probability of his being there. In fact, the pleasure with which she had greeted Mr. Wickham gave the death-blow to her chance of winning Lord St. Maur; for he now felt, not only that he was regarded with indifference, but another, his inferior in rank and fortune, was preferred, and it was with a very acrimonious tone of voice he inquired, "how it happened

that Mr. Wickham had favoured them with his company?"

"Why," replied Lady Emily, "I invited him, to be sure; out of compliment to Cecil, in great measure, though, I must acknowledge, I like him myself, excessively."

"Did Miss Moubray, then, ask for an invitation?"

"No, no; we met him at Thornborough. He is a great friend, you know, of Mr. Stukely's, who married Eliza Thornborough, and was at the wedding. Cecil was delighted to see him; you know, Horace, I always said he would be *the man*. Don't you remember what long visits he used to pay in Grosvenor-square when Cecil was with us?"

"I really remember nothing at all about it," replied the Earl, pushing back his chair with some vehemence.

"Yes," continued Lady Emily, "I was certain, then, Mr. Wickham was the favourite, and so the event has proved. You have no idea,

St. Maur, how Cecil blushed this morning, when I told her you said that the match would be a very good one."

Cecil, it is true, did colour violently, on hearing that such was Lord St. Maur's opinion ; but not from the motives supposed by Lady Emily ; for, in the common acceptation of the term, Edward Wickham could not be considered a good match for her, since his yearly income was considerably less than hers, and his family mere mushrooms, as compared with the Moubrays ; there was, also, too great a disparity of years between them. It was not, therefore, a feeling of conscious attachment which called the blood into her cheeks, but one of mortification, at the supposition that Lord St. Maur should hold her in so low an estimation.

"I must confess," pursued the loquacious Lady Emily, "that I am not of your opinion on this subject ; for I think Cecil might do better, a great deal better ; at the same time, if she really prefers Mr. Wickham to any other

man, it is not wonderful she should marry him ; and I dare say he'll make an excellent husband, and Cecil will be quite happy ; at any rate, if she is not, she can blame no one but herself. She's such a sensible girl, I've no doubt she has chosen well."

"I hardly know," observed Eleanor, "whether Miss Moubray is most to be envied or admired. At all events, hers is a singular history ; there are so few women, who, in marrying, have even the shadow of a choice. And for the credit of my sex, I fear the number is not much greater of those who, like our charming friend, are above worldly considerations in selecting their future partner, and listen only to reason and affection. But she is, in all respects, a most superior person, and has my best wishes for her welfare. Will the marriage soon take place, Emily ?"

"I really cannot say ; Cecil denies the engagement altogether, or rather, I should say, the notion of their ever being more than friends.

But some girls always conceal things of this kind as long as it is possible ; although, I must own, I could never see why."

"Perhaps," replied Lady Newrystown, in a low, mysterious tone of voice, "Miss Moubray is anxious to avoid wounding the feelings of some less successful admirer."

Lady Emily was at a loss to understand her cousin's meaning. But not so, Lord St. Maur, who darted out of the room in a highly-excited state of feeling. His attachment to Miss Moubray, then, was not unknown to Eleanor. "And how," he angrily asked himself, "had it been betrayed? Perhaps, even by Cecil herself; for vain and unprincipled women scruple not to boast of their triumphs." And as this most mistaken idea fastened on his imagination, it is not easy to describe the feelings of anger and indignant pride which it called forth against the very being whose peace of mind he was even then destroying.

CHAPTER XI.

FROM that time Cecil saw little of her guardian. A few days after the ball he left Selwood, accompanied by Sir Thomas Warham, who had a law suit pending respecting an Irish estate. William Beauclerc, also, took his departure from Firgrove to his family property, which lay in a distant county; and Eleanor, who thought proper to affect a great friendship for Miss Moubray, oscillated like the pendulum of a clock between the two houses.

Cecil was thus at liberty to form her future plans; and widely different were her present arrangements from those she had projected on a

former occasion ; for she had learnt that grandeur and happiness are not synonymous, and determined to employ her abundant wealth, not in selfish gratifications, or worldly enjoyments, but in administering to the welfare of her fellow-creatures. Her future establishment, therefore, was modelled on as moderate a footing as was consistent with her station in society. She ordered from town a plain, but well-appointed, travelling chariot ; desired Wilcox to engage a livery servant, whose respectability of character (not height of stature) should be his recommendation ; requested Mrs. Wilson, her former governess, to reside in future in her household ; and postponed any necessary changes, in the way of furnishing or improving Eldersleigh, until she could herself give the necessary directions on the spot.

The ninth of April was Miss Moubray's birthday ; the fifteenth, Lady Emily had fixed upon for her removal to town ; and on the twelfth, Cecil intended to leave Selwood. Two days

previous to that on which she was to attain her majority, Lord St. Maur and William Beauclerc returned from London.

“ Well, Lady Emily,” said the latter, “ so Lord Henry is cruel, and Miss Draxford wears the willow.”

“ Yes,” replied her ladyship, who was seated on a sofa by Cecil’s side ; “ the marriage is off, and a very sad business it is.”

“ Were they actually engaged ?”

“ I hardly know whether there was a positive engagement ; but everybody blames him for not knowing his mind sooner. For my part, I think his conduct perfectly disgraceful ; there really ought to be a law to punish men who act in so dishonourable a manner. You know, poor girl, she has no brother, or I suppose there would have been a challenge, and Lord Henry brought to his senses ; her father being a clergyman, of course he could do nothing of the kind.”

“ Does she feel it very much ?”

“ Dreadfully. I met her the other day, and

was quite shocked at the alteration in her appearance."

"Oh, she will get over it, never fear; young ladies (with a glance at Cecil) who are crossed in love, always look ill at first. It's the rule, you know; but, take my word for it, that sort of thing never lasts long, and Miss Draxford will soon recover her good looks again, and get another lover, too, who, we may hope, will prove less callous than the old one."

"I trust so; but her mother is dreadfully alarmed about her; they are going abroad immediately."

"They are quite right; change of scene is the best plan in such cases. I can speak from experience. When I was in love ——"

"*You* in love, William?" interrupted Lady Emily. "Pray, when could that have been? I am sure I never heard of your being in love in all my life."

"Possibly not; nevertheless, I was once fairly in love."

“And why did you not marry? Was the lady cruel?”

“Just the reverse; she was only too kind.”

“Perhaps her friends objected?” observed Cecil, who felt it necessary to say something.

“On the contrary, they were exceedingly anxious for the connexion.”

“Then,” said Lady Emily, “I suppose that when you came to talk of settlements you discovered that the lady had not money enough?”

“No; she had thirty thousand pounds, which is quite as much as any woman ought to have; that, therefore, was not the difficulty. So you must guess again.”

“I’m sure I can think of nothing else. But, I believe, you are hoaxing us; I don’t think you ever cared for any one.”

“Excepting yourself,” thought Cecil.

“I assure you, Lady Emily, I was seriously attached; and if the lady had not been so *very* fond of me, I should certainly have married her. But, from the moment I ascertained how much

she was in love with me, I ceased to care one farthing for her."

"Oh, William, how very shocking!"

"Say, rather, how very silly; she should have kept her secret a little longer. But, after all, why do I blame her for falling into the common error of the day; modesty, we all know, is out of date; and reserve, a piece of wisdom few women think necessary; and, on my life, I believe that is one reason so many girls remain unasked; for if familiarity breeds contempt, most assuredly want of delicacy must produce disgust. Has it never struck you, Miss Moubray, that the old sage advice, formerly given to our grandmothers, that they would do well to conceal the strength of their affection even from their husbands, might be studied with advantage by their grand-daughters, respecting those who are, or those they wish to be, their admirers?"

"But," observed Lady Emily, "if a young woman does not, in some measure, mark her

preference of one man over another, how is he to know whether or not he is likely to be accepted? I declare, William, according to your plan, I think there would be no offers at all."

"There is very little probability that the experiment will be made, but if it were, I am persuaded no such melancholy results would follow. Depend upon it, Lady Emily, that a man who is really attached, and has made up his mind to marry, is not easily discouraged."

"My dear Anna," cried Lady Emily; "come here, I wish you to write a note for me to Mrs. Penfold."

Anna, who had been for the last three quarters of an hour listening to Mr. Thornborough with very apparent pleasure, obeyed the summons; and while her mamma explained the object of the note, Beauclerc, dropping his voice to a whisper, addressed Cecil.

"I trust, Miss Moubray, that in speaking as I have done, I have said nothing that has in

the remotest degree distressed you. Pray forgive me, if I have wounded your feelings."

"Cecil tried to look as if she did not understand him.

"There is," he continued, "the greatest difference between a young woman, who foolishly proclaims her attachment to the whole world, and likes to have her disappointment made the theme of all the silly gossips in the neighbourhood, and *she* who, on the contrary, endeavours to conceal and overcome her feelings. And I greatly admire your determination of leaving Selwood ; I believe, there are not many who would act with so much (I may say) heroism."

If Cecil Moubray had lived in the much-talked-of days of Elizabeth, it is just possible, William Beauclerc's impertinence might have received a rebuke similar to that inflicted by the maiden queen on her refractory favourite ; but as it is no longer usual for young ladies to use their hands in such a manner, Miss Mou-

bray endeavoured to master her vexation, and to assume an air of indifference, as she replied—

“I cannot think I have any claim to praise, nor that there is the slightest approach to heroism in repairing to my own house and future home.”

“Is there none in making a very painful sacrifice? For my part, I think it requires no little fortitude to tear oneself away from the dearest object of our heart. But you will reap the benefit of the strength of mind you are now displaying; only suffer me to caution you against any singularity in your religious opinions; that sort of thing is very much in fashion now, and many young women who have not your force of character, are apt to turn saints because they happen to have been a little crossed or disappointed. But it is bad taste as well as being quite unnecessary, for, depend upon it, no attachment (at least, no *unrequited* attachment), however deeply rooted, can eventually stand the test of absence; and

such, I am confident, will be your experience ; therefore, much as I shall regret your departure, I am not selfish enough to ask you to remain."

"Mr. Beauclerc ——" cried Cecil.

"Yes, yes, I know what you would say, and that you feel sceptical just now ; but wait a few months, and you will find I am a true prophet. Believe me, therefore, when I tell you, there is no such thing as constancy, either in man or woman."

"Mr. Beauclerc ——" again interrupted Cecil.

"See, Lord St. Maur is looking this way ; shall we appeal to his judgment ? Yes, yes, we will ; he shall be umpire." And he beckoned to his cousin, who immediately drew near.

"Mr. Beauclerc, I entreat you will not," cried Cecil, with a beseeching look.

"Fear nothing," he replied, in an audible whisper, "your secret is in honourable keeping." Then addressing Lord St. Maur—"We

want you to settle a dispute, St. Maur, respecting the merits of Rossini and Mozart. Miss Moubray affirms that Mozart's is the highest genius; I, on the other hand, prefer Rossini."

"Mozart, Rossini?" exclaimed Lady Emily, who had at length finished her directions to Anna—"Mozart, Rossini! We were not talking of them, William, but of Lord Henry D——'s shameful conduct to poor Miss Draxford."

"True, Lady Emily; but did not the quarrel originate in a dispute about a piece of music? some duet that she refused to sing, which so much offended his fickle lordship that he withdrew himself?"

"I never heard that that was the cause of the quarrel; did you, Cecil?"

"Then I must have dreamt it, I suppose," replied Beauclerc. "But tell me, St. Maur, to which of those great men do you adjudge the palm? As I before observed, Rossini is my favourite, and for this reason." Then followed a long discussion on the subject, in

which Cecil (hoping to allay Lord St. Maur's evident curiosity) took an active part. But neither her look of entreaty, nor Beauclerc's reply, had escaped his notice ; which, in fact, had been previously attracted by the anxiety depicted on her countenance, and she gained little in his estimation by the conviction, that not only was there something she wished to conceal from him, but that she had chosen such a man as Beauclerc for her confidant. Could Lord St. Maur have guessed what that *something* was, how great had been the difference both to himself and Cecil !

Sad and solemn were the feelings with which Miss Moubray hailed her twenty-first birth-day ; for her mind was fully impressed with a due sense of the weighty responsibility attached to the possession of wealth ; and she dreaded lest she should abuse the blessings so lavishly bestowed upon her, or misapply the benefits committed to her charge. From that day, also, she and Lord St. Maur would be nothing to

each other, and, however painful, in many respects, their connexion had proved, she could not contemplate its entire dissolution without regret.

But other subjects soon intruded themselves; friendly congratulations, kind wishes, and testimonies of regard, claimed her attention. She received well-chosen and splendidly-bound books from Sir Thomas Warham, who was still absent; Mrs. Henrietta Beauclerc's complimentary note was accompanied by specimens of rare old china; there was *bijouterie* from Lady Emily and Anna; while Lady Newrystown presented two exquisitely-worked ottoman covers, which Cecil, unable to refuse, would gladly have committed to the flames; and Mary, a large *red morocco* work-box, not of the prettiest description, certainly, but her own choice, bought from her own little funds; and Cecil cherished that gift far above its more costly companions.

“And will *he* give me nothing?” she asked

herself, as, with Anna on her arm, she entered the breakfast-room. “Not even one kind wish on such a day as this? Will he be the only one who does not even *profess* an interest in me?” It would appear so ; for while Beauclerc, after presenting some very beautiful hot-house flowers, warmly shook the hand she had most unwillingly extended, with grace and apparent cordiality offered the accustomed compliments, Lord St. Maur, with a slight reference to the day, informed her, that as there were some papers to which her signature was necessary, he should be glad to see her in his private study as early as might be convenient.

Cecil had a very particular dislike to that private study, for it was connected in her mind with an exceedingly unpleasant occurrence,—to wit, the altercation relative to her Cheltenham expedition ; and when, after having lengthened out her breakfast, and caught at every possible pretext for delay, she finally found herself at the door of the apartment, she had scarcely power

to knock, so great was her breathless trepidation. But after a minute's consideration, the folly of yielding to such feelings became apparent, and by a powerful effort recovering her self-composure, with a firm and collected air she entered the room.

Lord St. Maur placed a chair for his ward ; then seating himself at a little distance, entered at once on the business which had brought them together ; and Cecil, far too nervous to understand a word he said, or in any measure follow him through the various details he was endeavouring to explain, signed mechanically all the papers he placed before her. Hardly ten minutes, however, had elapsed, when the door opened, and Lady Newrystown came into the room, holding in her hand an open letter, and looking most peculiarly fascinating.

“Horace,” she said, in a very dulcet voice, “are you alone ? Can you give me your attention for five minutes ? I have been sadly perplexed by this letter from my man of business.

I beg your pardon Miss Moubray, I really was not aware you were here. Sit still, I entreat you, St. Maur, it is of no consequence whatever ; I merely wished for your opinion, and will return when you are at liberty. I am going instantly ; yet stay," she continued, pausing before a bookcase,—“ Do I not see an edition of Moliere ? The work I want to consult of all things ; for I am certain William was wrong in that quotation he made so very impertinently yesterday evening ; and, if you will allow me, I will carry off the volume, and silence him at once. But don't move, I know exactly where to find the passage ; pray don't let me interrupt you, I shall not be one moment.”

But Lady Newrystown had over-rated her knowledge of Moliere ; she could not find the passage. Volume, after volume was taken down and replaced ; and, as Cecil and her guardian found it awkward to sit looking, or rather, *not* looking at each other, for they carefully avoided a mutual glance, their former

occupation was resumed, and even concluded, before Eleanor had finished her search.

“ I really beg your pardon a thousand times, Miss Moubray,” she said, at length, advancing towards the table, having ascertained that the dangerous interview was over, and Cecil preparing to leave the room. “ I have need of all your indulgence to pardon my intrusion, which, after all, has been to very little purpose, for I have not been successful, although, as this is the same edition as that we have at Newrystown, I fancied myself at home ; and even now I can hardly understand how I have missed finding it ;” again referring to the volume she held in her hand.

Cecil coldly assured Lady Newrystown that her presence had been no interruption ; and, if she had ever questioned the existence of the engagement between that lady and her guardian, her doubts were now entirely dispelled ; for she felt that none but a wife elect would have taken the liberty of entering that room in

so unceremonious a manner ; while Lord St. Maur, who saw clearly enough that the whole was a manœuvre on Eleanor's part, actually imagined that it had been preconcerted between the ladies to save Miss Moubray from the possible consequences of a tête-à-tête conversation with him.

"You need not have been afraid, Miss Moubray," he said, mentally ; "pretty as you are, I have no intention of making a fool of myself ;" then, observing that she was attempting to gather up the papers, added aloud, "Allow me, Miss Moubray, to save you that trouble ; I will arrange, and have them sent to your room."

"A hint for my departure," thought Cecil, rising ; Lord St. Maur rose also, and, in a tone of extreme coldness, begged her acceptance of a trifle, which, perhaps, on Mary's account, she would sometimes condescend to wear." It was a bracelet, like that Cecil had once so much admired, with Mary's picture underneath the clasp ; and given differently would have been


highly prized by her : but the manner in which he presented it was so entirely devoid of all friendly feeling, that she found it difficult even to accept it.

“How very beautiful,” cried Eleanor, clasping the trinket on Miss Moubray’s arm ; “and the likeness admirable ; I never saw a better one ; is it not the very image of that lovely child ?”

Cecil agreed with Lady Newrystown in praising the beauty of the workmanship and exquisite delicacy of the painting ; which was, in truth, a very correct likeness. And after expressing her acknowledgments to the donor in a tone of as much indifference as she could command, left the room. And thus terminated Lord St. Maur’s guardianship of Cecil Moubray.

CHAPTER XII.

Two days after, at an early hour, Cecil left Selwood. There was little stir attending her departure. On the preceding evening she and Lady Emily had taken leave of each other, with mutual expressions of concern, and hopes of again meeting. Eleanor had overwhelmed her with civil regrets; William had been disagreeable and impertinent, as usual; and Lord St. Maur, although annoyed by her intention of leaving his house, made no attempt to detain her. Once, indeed, during the evening, when her journey was alluded to, she had observed an ex-



pression of gravity, almost amounting to reproach, upon his countenance ; and once he remained standing near, as if desirous of addressing her, but some one called off her attention, and when it was again free, he had left the room ; nor did he return that night.

“Miss Moubray,” said Mason, the next morning “perhaps it will be better for you to take your breakfast in your room, instead of below stairs ; ’twill save time, and not be so lonely like.”

Cecil assented, and having drank some tea—for she had not much appetite—told her officious abigail that the carriage might come round, for she was now quite ready. But her heart was heavy, and a painful sense of desolation came across her mind, as she reflected, while softly traversing the long corridor which led to the staircase, that amongst all the inmates of the numerous apartments whose doors she passed, there was not one who felt sufficient interest in her to rise and bid her farewell. But there is one room Cecil cannot pass ; the door was

gently unfastened, and she stood by the bedside of her little cousin. Mary slept the deep, sweet sleep of careless childhood ; and as she lay, one rounded arm beneath her head, the other stretched across the bed-clothes, the long dark lashes resting on her peach-like cheek, and her full lips just breaking into a smile, Cecil thought of her own lonely, unprotected lot, and envied the fair child ; she lightly kissed her little dimpled hand, and Mary awoke.

“Cecil,” she cried, “why are you up so early ? You’ve got your things on too ; are you going to walk before breakfast ? Wait a minute, and I’ll get up and come with you.”

“Lie still, my love, I’m not going to walk ; lie still, dear Mary, lie still ; it is not time yet for you to rise.”

“Then, Cecil, you are going away ; I am sure you are. They wouldn’t tell me, but I know you are : oh Cecil, why do you go ? Why can’t you stay and live here always, as you used to do ?”

“Eldersleigh is my home, Mary, and I ought to live there.”

“Then take me with you, Cecil, pray do.”

“My dearest child, it is impossible; but I will write to you, and you must answer my letter, and tell me everything you can think of; and when Lady Emily comes to see me at Eldersleigh, you will come too, my own Mary.”

“But won’t you come back again, Cecil, won’t you ever come back to Selwood?”

“Mary, my dearest,” said Miss Moubray, without replying to her last appeal, “listen to me; I have something to say to you about Lady Newrystown; she is very kind to you, and——”

“Yes, Cecil, but I can’t bear her; I hate her.”

“Hush, hush, Mary; we are forbidden to hate any one; and you must try to like, to love, Lady Newrystown.”

“Cecil, she is wicked, and tells stories; besides, she doesn’t like you; I know she

doesn't, although she pretends to be very fond of you."

"It matters not, Mary; *you* must try to love her, for your papa's sake."

"Nurse says, she wants to marry papa, but she shan't, for I won't let him marry her."

"My dearest child, you cannot prevent it, nor ought you to try."

"Why, Cecil, mayn't I prevent papa from marrying Lady Newrystown?"

"Recollect how kind and indulgent he is to you, Mary; and if he would be happier married to Lady Newrystown, you ought not to wish to prevent it; on the contrary, you must endeavour to please him, by loving her; for if he loves her, it will vex him that you should not. But you will, my Mary, try to get over this feeling, for indeed it is not right; I am sure you will; remember, *I* ask you." (Cecil's voice grew very husky.) "And look, my own Mary, here is something I know you will value—a little book, given long ago by your mamma to mine; and

now I give it to you ; keep it for my sake, and read a little of it every morning, and try to do whatever you find written there, and so you will be happy."

Mary took the little pocket bible, looked piteously at Cecil, then throwing her arms around her neck, clasped her so closely that she knew not how to disengage herself; but at that moment, Mary's nurse, who slept in the inner room, attracted by her loud sobs, came to the bedside, and Miss Moubray wrung in silence the hand of the trusty old servant, placed Mary in her arms, and after one more hurried kiss, hastened away. She returned for a few minutes to her own apartment, to remove the traces of her agitation; and then being informed by Mason (whose anxiety to get her mistress off was inexpressible) that the carriage had been waiting for full ten minutes, descended for the last time the noble staircase.

In crossing the hall, she was joined by Lord St. Maur; he accosted her with infinite formality;

and after a few common-place remarks respecting the weather, state of the roads, &c. &c., offered his hand to assist her into the carriage. And thus, without one expression of regret, one word of hope that they might meet again, they parted !

Now, Lady Newrystown, the game is in your hands ; Cecil is gone, Mary will soon forget her, and Lord St. Maur has received what he considers equivalent to a refusal ; an offence, which very few men can pardon.

Within the last few hours, unconsciously to herself, Miss Moubray's manner towards her late guardian had become softened ; and as, in spite of all that had occurred, he loved her still, he rose from a sleepless pillow, determined to explain his feelings ; and in order, if possible, to guard against interruption, ordered breakfast in a room formerly the school-room, and now considered as almost exclusively appropriated to Mary. But Mason, through whom he sent a message to her mistress, was too well aware of

the probable consequences of a last interview to allow it to take place. Hence her proposal that Cecil should breakfast above stairs; and in return for his friendly invitation, Lord St. Maur was told, with Miss Moubray's compliments, that she preferred taking that meal in her own apartment.

The Earl bit his lip. "So," thought he, "she guesses my intention, and would save herself the annoyance of saying what in truth her actions have already long ago proclaimed. Still, methinks, it would have been but courteous to have met my wishes, and granted me an interview. Cecil, I hardly thought you would have acted so unfeelingly; but perhaps it is better I should know how utterly misled and deceived I have been in you.

It is singular that in seeking to account for Lord St. Maur's apparently great unkindness, a suspicion of the truth never once flashed across Miss Moubray's mind; nor did she imagine pique at her altered manner to have

swayed him, for she was not aware of the length to which the change had gone. And even, once or twice, when that surmise did present itself, it was speedily passed by ; for, she argued, that had he been offended, he would assuredly have remonstrated with her on her caprice. There were, therefore, other motives for his estrangement ; either she had been the object of a transitory flirtation, and thrown aside in consequence of a more serious attachment to his cousin ; or the cordiality which had existed between them since General Moubray's death had given umbrage to Eleanor, who had prompted him to assume a different manner.

“ Perhaps,” Cecil thought, “ he has even discovered the nature of my feelings towards him, and wishes to make me understand how entirely hopeless is my attachment. Be it as it may, however, it is not *thus* we should have parted ; surely there might have been some slight expression of interest in my welfare, and, considering how very ignorant and inexperienced I am,

it would have been no more than a common act of kindness had he offered his assistance or advice in case I meet with difficulties in managing my property."

Thus reasoned Cecil ; but she shed no tears ; for pride had hushed each softer feeling. Mason, too, had chosen to seat herself beside her mistress ; and, though highly provoked by the impertinent intrusion, Miss Moubray feared to irritate her imperious waiting woman by declining her society. Cecil wept not ; still, as she drove for the last time through the beautifully wooded park, and glanced her farewell look towards the mansion so long her home,—and, for a short, bright space, her *happy* home, and which it was now quite clear she should behold no more, a sad and sinking sense of loneliness weighed down her soul. She felt herself, in truth, a solitary wanderer on the world's highway ; that, let her future destiny be what it might—let sorrow, anguish, sickness, come upon her—alone, and unprotected, she must bear it all.

“ But I must not give way to such desponding thoughts,” she said, making a strong effort to shake off the gloomy impression ; “ it is both weak and sinful to dwell thus only on the dark side of the picture, while I forget so much that is bright, and should be joyous. Let me not overlook the many blessings showered upon me. Have I not health, youth, and riches ? May I not serve my fellow-creatures, relieve their wants, succour their distress, perhaps bestow that happiness denied to me ? Yes, I will henceforth live for others.” Cecil kept that resolution, as far, at least, as a poor erring mortal can : her trials had not been thrown away.

They had not long passed the lodge, when Mrs. Mason, who had given various symptoms of uneasiness latterly, stooped down, and dragging something black from beneath the seat, cried out, with no very pleasant expression of countenance, “ So, it’s you, Daisy, is it, that has been *worritting* about my legs, and tearing the binding off my boots for ever so long ? For the life of me, I couldn’t think what it was ; and,

after all, it turns out to be nothing but a nasty little brute of a dog."

"Daisy!" exclaimed Cecil; naughty Daisy, how did you come here?" as the tiny animal, extricated from Mason's clutches, jumped on Miss Moubray's knee, and lay there, panting and quivering with delight.

Daisy could not tell his own story; but, perhaps, had he possessed the power of speech, might have informed our heroine, that having observed sundry articles belonging to her placed in the carriage, his canine sagacity suggested the possibility of her following; and as he was in the constant habit of accompanying her, there appeared no reason why he should waive his privilege on the present occasion; but having been twice ejected by the servants while packing the carriage, thought it prudent, on finding his third attempt unnoticed, to remain *perdu* for a short time; and, but for his unfortunate offence against Mrs. Mason's boots, would probably have delayed emerging from his place of concealment.

“I suppose, Miss Moubray,” said Mason, with some emphasis, “you don’t mean to take his lordship’s dog away with you? Nasty, little creature; I declare, he’s quite ruined my boots. I put them on new this morning, and now they’re not fit to be seen; you deserve to be hanged, you do, you vile little brute!”

“No, Daisy,” said, Miss Moubray, “you cannot come with me, my pretty fellow, you must go back to Selwood with the horses.”

But the horses are changed; and in return for Cecil’s golden gratuity, their drivers have given golden wishes; the little town of L—— is far behind, and Daisy still remains.

“I cannot part with you, my little, affectionate creature,” said Cecil, stroking his pretty satin head. “Yes, you shall go with me; I will tell Mary when I write,—yes, Daisy, you shall stay; there are so few that love me I cannot afford to lose a friend.”

CHAPTER XIII.

TOWARDS evening they reached Eldersleigh. Miss Moubray had requested that, if possible, the exact day of her expected arrival might be kept secret; for she wished to avoid those demonstrations of pleasure with which the landed proprietor is ordinarily welcomed on first taking possession of his property; and her wishes were obeyed; for the tenantry, unaccustomed to the presence of their landlord, were hardly inclined to consider her approach a benefit; therefore, although it was pretty well

understood that on such a day the owner of Eldersleigh would reach her future home ; although, in driving through the village, the postilions spurred on their jaded animals, and ran over two old women and five pigs ; yet, with the exception of the ragamuffin children, who shouted as they ran before the horses' heads, or their slatternly mothers, who rushed to every door and window of the place to see the handsome equipage, or scold back their ragged offspring, and of the village curs, that barked and yelped, as village curs are wont to do, Cecil's return to Eldersleigh was unobserved.

She was disappointed, not at finding her wishes so strictly adhered to, but at the miserable appearance of the long line of dirty, straggling, ill-kept cottages. " Surely it was not thus in former days," she thought, trying to recollect the Eldersleigh of her memory, or, it may be, of her fancy ; for the idea of a place

we have known only in childhood, is rather perhaps more akin to the creative power than to the remembrance.

Eldersleigh, indeed, was changed ; for on his brother's death the living had been presented by General Moubray to one of that class of persons who do but little honour to the cloth—a fox-hunting non-resident. And although his successor, the present incumbent, did reside, and did not hunt, yet as he was a grasping, avaricious man, who shewed far more solicitude for his own personal advantages than the welfare of his flock, the village gained little by his residence.

I am far from agreeing with a popular writer of the day, in ascribing the superior moral tone of society in England to the influence and presence of the wives and daughters of our clergy ; for I believe it is pretty well understood, that in the many grades existing in what is called *the world ; fashion* (and each circle has *its* fashion) alone is the presiding deity, to whose

imperious dictates every person bows. If she be pretty, a clergyman's daughter would be asked to dance ; if wealthy, to marry ; if well connected, *she* will be admitted where other girls of high connexions are ; but what has all this to do with her father's calling ? Just nothing at all. Nor will his wife, nor even the reverend gentleman himself, gain from society one iota of increased deference in consequence of his profession. If they are highly born, wealthy, and *fashionable*, they will be courted, and their opinions listened to ; if they are not, they will take their place among their equals. Query,—Has a clergyman or his family any business to be in such society at all ?

Still, there *is* a sphere in which a Christian minister has much influence ; and that is, in his own parish, and among his own parishioners. There, he is somebody ; there, his opinion carries weight ; and while a strict observance of the duties of his station challenges the respect

and veneration of his flock, his wife and daughters, if they are what the wife and daughters of a Christian pastor ought to be, will command confidence and love.

Such had been the case at Eldersleigh during Mr. Moubray's lifetime ; an upright man, a conscientious minister, he had been indefatigable in his efforts for the moral and spiritual improvement of the people committed to his charge. Their orderly habits, and the neatness of their little dwellings, proved that his labour had not been in vain. But it was very different now, as the changed aspect of the village fully testified.

The woods of Eldersleigh skirted the village ; the hall itself was two miles distant ; some little time, therefore, elapsed, before they reached a building, graced by the name of lodge, and forming the entrance to the Park. Everything around betokened a place long neglected by its owner ; for, although Lord St. Maur had done all he could for its improvement during

the short period in which he had the direction of the estate ; in the course of a few months but little could be done in repairing the neglect of years. General Moubray wished to *save*, not *make* money ; he had therefore obstinately refused to lay out anything beyond a mere pitance in keeping up the property. And, although the sale of the exuberant growth of timber would have benefited the estate, and increased his fortune, he would not give his consent that any of it should be cut down ; consequently, notwithstanding much had been felled latterly, the growth was still immense ; and thus, what should have been an ornament, became a complete incumbrance, which impeded the view and choked the free current of air ; while stagnant pools of water, and dense masses of underwood, loaded the atmosphere with unwholesome vapours.

Once upon a time the Park had been well stocked with deer ; but long ago these graceful creatures had betaken themselves to the more

extensive range of the neighbouring forests ; or fallen victims to certain *rightminded* individuals who saw no harm whatever in thus laying hands upon the property of an absentee landlord ; for since the death of Lady Sarah Moubray, about five and twenty years back, no one had resided at the hall, the General's visits being those of mere necessity, and brief and rare as need be.

The aspect was dreary enough ; but Cecil was not disheartened. She had a considerable sum of ready money in her banker's hands, which she could appropriate to the immediate improvement of the place. The sale of the timber would bring more, and she had thus the means of benefitting her poor tenantry, and of providing herself with a constant and most interesting employment. She did not therefore at all sympathize in her waiting woman's exclamations of surprise and discontent as they were bumped and jolted over ruts and hillocks worthy of the Devonshire lanes or Hereford-

shire cross-roads; nor, when a sudden turn of the road brought them quite unexpectedly in front of the house, was she (as Mrs. Mason declared herself to be) ready to faint at the sight of such a terrible, old, prison-like looking place.

Three persons were standing at the entrance door; Mrs. Wilson, considerably amplified within the last two years, and not a little fluttered at the expected meeting, as she was not certain whether it was her old pupil or the mistress of Eldersleigh she was about to greet; Wickham, who, as he assisted Miss Moubray to alight, apologized for the liberty he had taken in ranking himself amongst those of her friends who were entitled thus to meet and welcome her; and a very consequential-looking individual, attired in black, and introduced as Dr. Styleigh.

But Cecil's pleased look of recognition quickly re-assured her pseudo governess; and Wickham's usually pale countenance flushed

with delight, as, with unaffected pleasure, she expressed her satisfaction at the meeting, while the cordiality with which she extended her hand to the reverend gentleman gave a momentary check to his vulgar pomposity. In the drawing room, Cecil was introduced to Mrs. and the Miss Styleighs; the first, a good-natured, motherly-looking woman (evidently not the grey mare), who discoursed in a smothered tone of voice, and smoothed, or rather stroked, her silk gown, when anything occurred calculated to rouse her sensibilities above their wont. The young ladies were red, healthy looking, square girls, dressed in white muslins, with coloured sashes, and silk handkerchiefs; whose habit in society was either to remain silent, or to speak all together; so that their intellectual acquirements or capabilities were not easily determined.

Miss Moubray declined dinner; and soon the whole party were seated round the tea table; a piece of conviviality (by the way) Cecil

would gladly have been spared ; for, although the Styleighs being at Eldersleigh to receive her could only be regarded as a mark of friendly attention, she thought, considering she had come a journey of eighty miles, and was of course a good deal fatigued, it would have been better taste had they withdrawn before the repast. Very wearisome did that evening appear to our heroine, and it was with real satisfaction she heard Wickham suggest the expediency of an early separation ; a recommendation which the rest of the party were at first, apparently inclined to follow ; but, unhappily, *supper* was mentioned, and forthwith they became glued to their respective chairs.

Mr. Wickham was vexed, and would still have taken leave, but a look from Cecil, who had found him most useful in entertaining her guests, instantly induced him to remain. Mr. Wickham was that sort of man whom you might ask to grant a favour and feel quite certain he would not presume upon it. Then,

after a good deal of opening and shutting the door, and heavy walking about the room (for Wilcox was not an accomplished butler), the table was covered with refreshments, and in obedience to an invitation from the smiling Mrs. Wilson, all crowded round; and Cecil was half deafened with the clatter of plates and knives, and jingling of glasses; and as she sat crumbling some seed cake, she looked at the Miss Styleighs, and thought within herself she had never seen young ladies with such appetites before.

At length the half hour after ten was struck by an old-fashioned clock on the chimney piece, and Wickham pointed to her jaded appearance once more, and, with better success than formerly, proposed a retreat.

“My dear Miss Moubray,” said the kind-hearted Mrs. Wilson, when they were alone; “it vexes me to see you look so thin and ill; and all your beautiful complexion too is gone. Oh! you are sadly changed, sadly changed,

indeed. I'm afraid you must have been raking lately ; late hours are so destructive for young people ; and I dare say you kept very late hours at Selwood, didn't you, my dear ? Yes, yes, depend upon it, that's what destroyed your good looks. I thought it would be so, when I heard General Moubray had determined upon leaving you with Lord St. Maur ; those great people lead such dissipated lives ; but it will be very different here, no turning night into day, and losing all the fine morning air ; but early hours, and a little quiet, rational society, and I have no doubt you will soon come round again."

Cecil assured Mrs. Wilson that her health had not been impaired by the dissipation of Selwood Castle ; that fatigue alone had caused her delicacy of appearance—then, extricating herself from Wilson's *voluminous* embrace, begged to be shewn her room.

"I don't know," said the elder lady, as she led the way, "whether you will like the room

I've fixed upon—(there's a step here)—I thought it better not to occupy *that* wing. This room, certainly, is very old-fashioned and dismal-looking, but mine is close at hand, and the servants sleep near, so I hope you won't feel frightened. And there's no danger of damp, my dear; we've kept up a constant fire for the last week, and I've seen to the airing of the bed myself."

Miss Moubray expressed her thanks. Then, observing her clothes were not unpacked, inquired if Anne Mason, the young person who was in future to be her waiting woman, had arrived.

"Yes, she came last week; I doubt, though, whether you will find her efficient. To me she seems nothing but a raw girl, fit only to be a housemaid. Who recommended her, my dear Miss Moubray?"

"Mason; she is, I believe, a niece of hers."

"I thought as much," said Mrs. Wilson, proceeding to repeat her opinion of the new

Abigail, when Cecil, dreading an harangue on household cares, again adverted to her fatigue, and had at length the satisfaction of being left alone.

“ Our mothers and grandmothers held different notions of comfort from ours,” thought she, while, standing before the high, old-fashioned chimney-piece, she took a rapid survey of her sleeping-room, with its oaken wainscoat, narrow strips of carpet, and bed hung round with crimson damask. “ No bell either? Surely they must have used bells in former days.” But it seemed not; Cecil, at least, could find none; and as her paraphernalia was not forthcoming, she felt she must have recourse to Mrs. Wilson’s assistance in summoning her dilatory attendant. She knocked accordingly at the door of the adjoining room, and receiving no answer, pushed it gently open, but it was closed again immediately, and Cecil started back, for she thought she beheld a *hearse*. Her terror, however, was but momentary, and she smiled at

her own folly and Mrs. Wilson's strange taste in choosing for herself a bed with black velvet curtains, surmounted with plumes of white feathers.

“ This furniture must be two hundred years old, at the very least,” thought Cecil, again opening the door. Mrs. Wilson was not there; she returned, therefore, to her own apartment, where she found Mason arranging her wardrobe, and abusing everything right and left; for, although so instrumental in Miss Moubray's leaving Selwood, this Worthy did not think it at all incumbent upon herself to smooth the annoyances, or soften the difficulties, of her mistress' novel situation. Mrs. Wilson's residence in the family, too, was unexpected by this unprincipled person, and her dissatisfaction on that account had, since their arrival at Eldersleigh, been materially increased by learning that Mrs. W. appeared inclined to take a very active part in the direction of the family.

“ 'Twill be as good as fifty pounds a year out

of my pocket if that old busybody lives here ; and I wont submit to no such injustice, that's flat," said Mason to herself, as she dragged out drawers, rattled keys, and slammed doors, after the fashion of persons of her class when some favourite scheme is placed in jeopardy.

" Pray, be less violent, Mason ; I'm dreadfully wearied, and cannot bear all this uproar. Besides, you are unpacking a great deal more than is necessary to-night."

Mason dashed down the lid of the imperial, at the same time muttering something about dismal rooms, and old-fashioned, good-for-nothing furniture.

" Certainly," replied Miss Moubray, " these rooms are not very cheerful ; but there is plenty of choice, and among so many there must be some more modern and convenient. The opposite wing appears to me preferable to this."

" I dare say Mrs. Wilson had good reasons for not choosing the other side," observed Mason, mysteriously.

“What reasons could she have, Mason? Are those rooms damp?”

“No, ma’am, I never heard that they were.”

“Out of repair, then?”

“No, ma’am.”

“The furniture, at any rate, cannot be more ancient than this?”

“Oh, no, ma’am; the housemaid was a-telling me they was all new furnished only a very short time before Lady Sarah died; and they look quite beautiful and fresh compared with these.”

“Then, why do you think Mrs. Wilson preferred this side of the building to the other?”

Mason looked big with information, yet forebore to speak.

“Mason, what in the world have you got in your head?”

“Me, ma’am! Why should you think I have got anything in my head, Miss Moubray?”

“Mason, I am certain you have taken up some strange idea; and I insist upon knowing what it is.”

“ Well, ma’am, if you insist upon it, I suppose I must *reweal* all I’ve heard ; although the servants did beg me never to say a word about it.”

“ About what ?” cried Cecil, impatiently.

“ I’m sure I don’t know what to think about it myself ; it may be true, or it mayn’t ; and I don’t *purtend* to give no judgment at all upon the subject, for I never before happened to live in a *haanted* house.”

“ Haunted house !” cried Cecil ; “ haunted house ! Ridiculous.”

“ Pray, Miss Moubray, don’t speak so ; it makes me creep all over.”

“ Surely, Mason, you are not silly enough to believe in ghosts ?”

Mason made no reply.

“ Did you ever see one ?”

“ No, Miss Moubray, I can’t say I ever did see a *spurrit*, and I hope I never shall ; but there are them as has.”

“ And what is it like ? An old lady, in a rustling silk gown ? ”

“ No, ma’am, the *spurrit* as sometimes walks in yonder gallery isn’t a lady.”

“ Then it is a gentleman, I suppose ? But who told you all this nonsense, Mason ; and when did you hear it ? ”

“ This evening, ma’am. The servants have been talking about it ; and that’s what made me so late.”

“ Then rely upon it, they have been amusing themselves at the expense of your credulity.”

“ I should hope they’d know better nor that, ma’am ; besides, it’s not the first time I have heard that the old lord walks ; nor you, neither, I should have thought, Miss Moubray.”

“ Do you mean the old baron who was beheaded for high treason ? ”

“ Yes, ma’am, I believe ’tis thought to be he that walks.”

“ Then, perhaps, he walks, as you call it,

with his head under his arm, as St. Dennis of France is said to have done ?”

“ Really, ma’am, I wish you wouldn’t talk so lightly ; ’tis said, them that’s incred’lous are always the first as is visited.”

“ How does it happen, Mason, that the ghost chooses to perambulate the most modern part of the house ? Ghosts, you know, in general, are supposed to like old ruins and deserted places.”

“ Really, ma’am, I can’t *purtend* to determine ; but, you know, there’s a great *w’riety* of tastes ; and I suppose a spectre may have a *petticlar* fancy as well as anybody else.”

“ True,” replied Cecil ; “ and it will be *my* fancy to occupy the pleasantest rooms in the house, whether they are chanced to be situated in this wing or the other.”

“ Surely, Miss Moubray, you would not be so venturesome as to sleep in a part of the building that was thought to be *hactually* *haanted* ?”

“ I shall sleep in which ever room appears to be most desirable; and you, Mason, will do well not to listen to such nonsensical stories.”

“ Well, ma’am, I hope they’ll prove to be nonsense. I own I should not like to see a *happarition*; but, perhaps, ’tis only the servants’ foolishness after all,—them country girls are so *hignorant*.”

“ At any rate,” replied Miss Moubray, “ if the old gentleman should prove troublesome, I shall write immediately to Lord St. Maur; and I have very little doubt he will prove a match for his ghostship.”

“ Very likely, ma’am,” was Mason’s laconic answer; and Cecil made no rejoinder; for though, in the heat of the moment, perhaps from the force of habit, she threatened an appeal to Lord St. Maur, she now asked herself whether, in an emergency, she could act up to her words? And how he would receive the application? And a painful conviction of the impossibility of such an appeal was her concluding

impression. “No,” she thought, “it would be out of the question ; after so unkind a parting I cannot, *will* not, ask a favour from him.” And then Mr. Wickham came before her mind, and she felt that from him she could at all times seek both advice and assistance.

Much has been said in praise of sleep ; but, for my part, I must say I think her a sad, coy jade, hiding herself from those who court and need her most ; and although fatigue of body may win her soothing influences, from weariness of soul she generally turns away. Cecil’s head was on her pillow, but she could not sleep. Already was she beginning to feel the painful nature of the sacrifice she had made in leaving Selwood ; for, although every sentiment of delicacy and propriety prompted her to fly the society of a man, who, notwithstanding his supposed engagement, was still only too dear to her, it had not been done without a pang ; the path of duty is not always smooth. The first impressions, also, of her future home, were not

enlivening, and as she thought of Mary's artless sorrow, and Lord St. Maur's unkindness, scalding tears of unrequited love, of deep, affectionate regret, ran over her pale cheeks. And when, at length, sleep stole upon her senses, it was still the same. Mary's last imploring look, his cold farewell, were ever present to her mind; she saw them in a thousand different places, and under circumstances as diverse—in all their former haunts, in those where they had never been; but the expression varied not—he never lost his look of stern displeasure, nor Mary hers of agonizing grief. It was a real relief when the hour tolled from the belfry of the neighbouring church and dispelled these uneasy slumbers.

The fire still burnt brightly; the atmosphere of the low-roofed room was most overcoming, and Cecil, feverish and excited, rose hastily, and, slipping on her dressing-gown, threw open the casement window. There had been rain,

and the pleased earth gave up a grateful smell. The air was mild and balmy, while from behind a dense cloud the moonbeams struggled as for freedom ; but gradually the heavy darkness rolled away, and the pale planet flooded the landscape with her soft, melancholy rays. There was little beauty in the scene thus brought to view ; but its sad solemnity accorded well with Cecil's dejected tone of mind. She looked towards the little building in which so many of her race had worshipped, where they had found at last a resting-place ; and by degrees a sweet and heavenly calm stole over her.

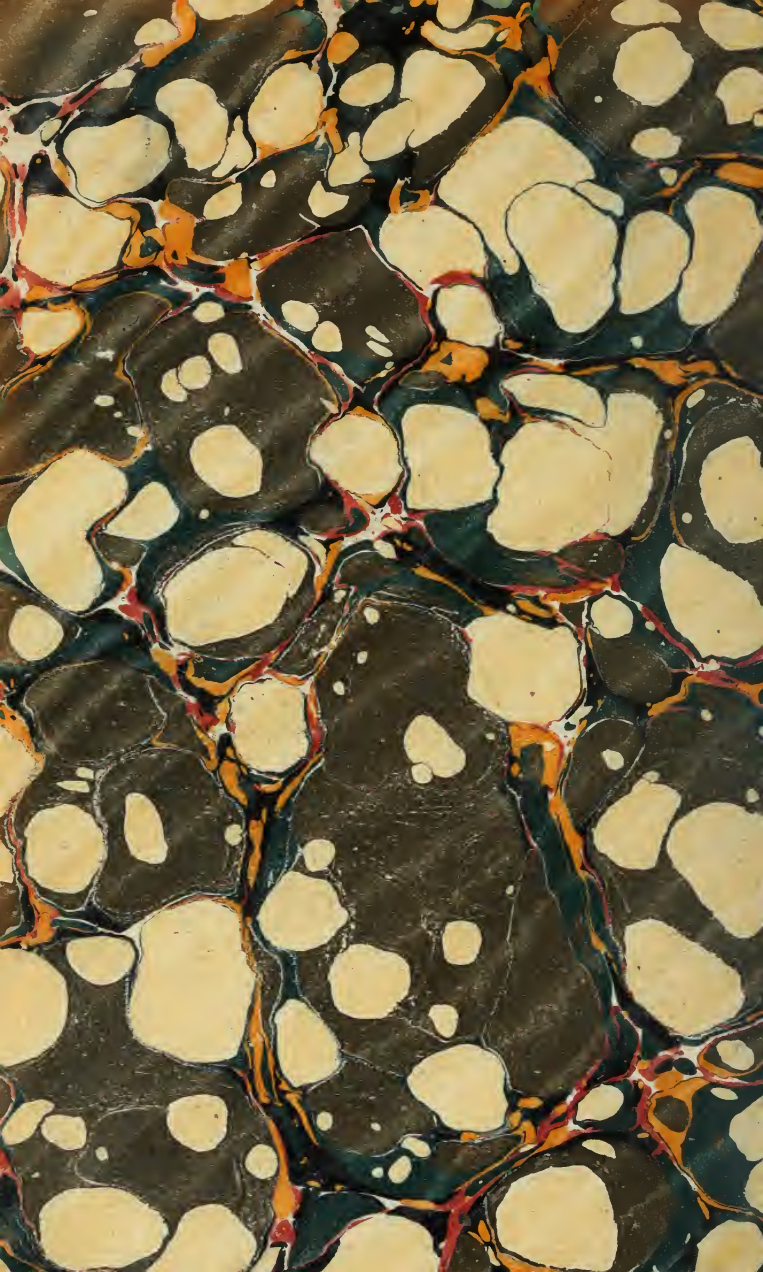
“ Yes,” she exclaimed, “ they toiled, and loved, and wept,—and now they sleep. So will it be with me ; a little struggle, a few more tears, sometimes, perhaps, a gleam of joy, and then—the grave. But is that all?—will all close there ? No, no. The grave is but the portal to eternity—the entrance to a land where tears and sorrow are unknown. Why then

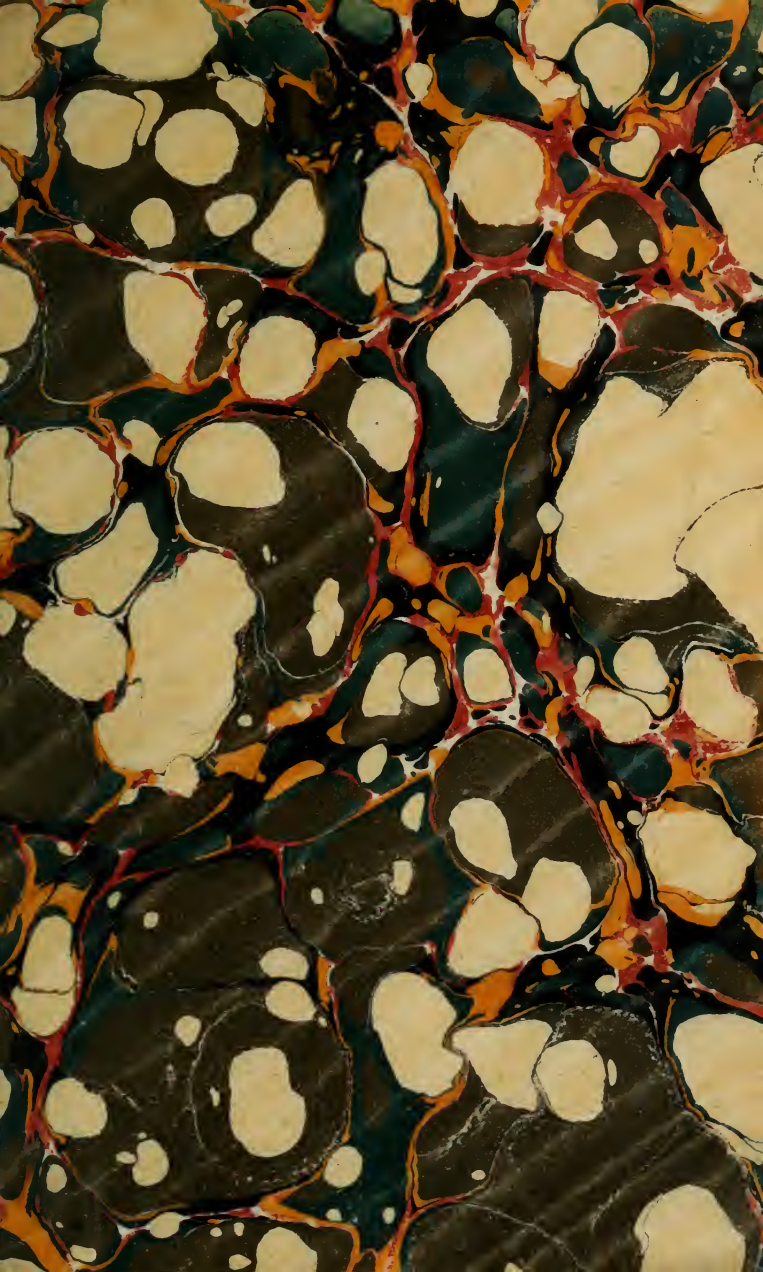
regret the dreamy pleasures of this passing life?
Why murmur, though the road be rough, since
it will surely lead to a happier and a better
world."

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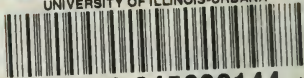








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